University of Alberta

Academic School Performance of Native Reserve Students

by

Gordon Breen

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

in

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Dr. F. Peters, Supervisor

Dr. K. Ward

Dr. S. Wilson

Dr. D. Richards

Dr. D. Sande

June 27 2003

Dr. T. Goddard, External Examiner

University of Alberta

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Abstract

The further that Aboriginal education operates from the community people, the greater the chance of failure. However, contemporary Native people also wish to be part of many aspects of mainstream society. The formidable task of creating a seamless merging of two cultures is an exciting and rewarding educational challenge.

The school performance of most students in this study has been unsuccessful as measured by Alberta Achievement Test and revealed in interviews. Those interviewed (educators in four Alberta reserve schools) were found to be weak in their understanding of Native education, but they did demonstrate a commitment to offer quality education.

Analysis of the interviews and a review of the literature show that Aboriginal schools require specific philosophies, programs, and approaches. Current research on Aboriginal schools exists as a collage of ideas and practices. By synthesizing this analysis, literature, and my personal experience, this dissertation has created a practice-centred model for Aboriginal band or school leaders. It is organized into seven categories of critical school needs, with each having numerous subrequirements. The component categories are Foundation as an Aboriginal Community; Clear School Identity; Community Relations; Instructional Practices; Management, Leadership, and Government; Family and Community; and Community Capacity. Intrinsic to all aspects of the model is being responsive to individual community heritage, contemporary practice, and aspirations.

As a non-Native writer with relatively extensive experience living in Aboriginal communities, my work may enhance non-Aboriginal educators' ability to meet the needs of Native students. Sometimes the powerful and insightful writings created by Aboriginal

authors are embedded in such a great deal of contemporary Native reality, culture, and wisdom that non-Aboriginal readers are unable to grasp the full meaning. Perhaps my cross-cultural understanding and experiences can allow for cultural translation, meaningful interpretation, and implementation strategies that will benefit educators of Aboriginal students.

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This study marks the completion of learning that would not be possible without the teachings of a variety of skilled and understanding University of Alberta professors. To each of them I offer my gratitude. I would like to thank specifically Dr. Frank Peters, my dissertation advisor. My professional career has been informed by two notable supervisors and extraordinary individuals. Thank you, Dr. Judith Knapp and Jim Martin.

Learning occurs in many ways. With this in mind, I would like to express appreciation to the people of the Dogrib Nation. Living and working with the Dogrib people of Whati, Yellowknife, Dettah, and Rae-Edzo (17 years) provided me with intellectual and personal growth that directed my adult maturation. Your sharing, patience, personal loyalty, and everyday wisdom have allowed me greater learning opportunities than many people encounter in a lifetime. My gratitude does not end there, as you have shared the same, as well as your hearts, families, and all you have with my daughter, Christina May. With still more care in your hearts, you welcomed Amie and Grace. Shortly after, the community embraced Deneca Malea. In short, my family was your family. Thank you for your unconditional generosity.

Appreciation is also extended to Christina and Grace for their acceptance of my absences and distractions, as well as their periodic typing support. Beyond appreciation is an inadequate recognition of my spouse Amie Embodo's commitment of support. Loving support means endless hours of typing, listening, giving feedback, and modelling a cross-cultural way of living that is remarkable in its success and simplicity. Sincerity, caring, humbleness, love for all, and a gentle, positive outlook on life go a long way. Thank you for the extensive personal and family support and accomplishments you provided.

Last, the foundation of my character and success comes from my parents, Charles Gordon and Irene May. You have given a great deal, and I miss you so much. Thank you for always accompanying me on my journeys through life. Diane and Marilyn, thank you for your faith in me and for being there. Barb, Don, and my aunts and uncles, you have been inspirations in ways I have never expressed. Ironically, this has been more true as I get older. Thank you. You all mean more than you know.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Current Circumstances

Aboriginal self-government and provincial/federal devolutions have provided Native people with a greater role in ownership and responsibility for Native reserve community organizations and services (Hedican, 1997). As with any developmental process, there have been successes, milestones, and false starts. Whatever the outcome, these community empowerment strategies are likely to provide valuable learning experiences toward the goal of greater independence and competency. The benefits of this for individuals and community organizations are significant.

According to Hedican (1997), Native reserve education, housing, and social assistance have experienced increases in Native community involvement and ownership. In schools there has been an increase in the number of teachers and paraprofessionals who are Aboriginal. There have also been increases in the number of band-controlled schools. In addition, culturally appropriate programming, elder participation in instructional activities, and local decision making have also made schools more community relevant (Stairs, 1995). Native students have become more comfortable and successful in school, with a larger number entering postsecondary institutions. Despite these general improvements in educational attainment, Aboriginal people in the 20 to 29 years-of-age group remain "only half as likely to have a postsecondary degree or diploma, one fifth as likely to have graduated from university, and over twice as likely not to have completed high school" (Statistics Canada, 1998c, p. 12).

Indications of potential success in high school or postsecondary education can be found at an early age. In Alberta, provincial achievement tests are given to all students. These results can be used as a current and early indicator of possible student performance in school. The test are given in Grades 3, 6, and 9. However, there has been little discussion about Native reserve student success, the nature of the results, school processing of the results, the usefulness of the test, and possible reasons for negative or positive Native reserve student performance on these tests. This dissertation presents the

perceptions of a selected group of teachers, principals, and district educators on the issue of Alberta Native reserve students' academic performance in reserve schools. The data for the study were obtained by reviewing the overall Alberta provincial achievement test results for Native reserve students, a review of selected categories of statistics for Aboriginal people in Alberta and generally across Canada, a review of related literature, and semistructured interviews with educators.

Statistical Indicators

The 1996 Canadian Census offers a statistical picture of Aboriginal circumstances in a number of areas. For the purposes of this study, statistics for Aboriginals in custody, Aboriginal rates of low income and level of earnings, level of education, and population change increases are reported. To ensure accuracy in interpretation, the statistics have been quoted directly from the sources. These are powerful indicators; however, Statistics Canada 1998c stated that

> considerable caution should be exercised in analyzing trends for the Aboriginal population based on previous census data because of changing patterns in Aboriginal self-identification and Aboriginal participation in the census. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some general trends. (p. 11)

Aboriginals in Custody

According to Statistics Canada (1998e), Adult Correctional Facility inmates are more likely to be male, young, and Aboriginal. Statistics Canada (1998b) also found that

> Aboriginal peoples were over represented in correctional institutions relative to their population. While they represented 3% of the general population, they accounted for 15% of federal admissions in 1996/97, up from 11% five years earlier. Similarly, Aboriginal peoples . . . accounted for . . . 39% of admissions in Alberta, almost eight times their share of the population in that province. (p. 3)

Low Income Among Aboriginal Population

According to Statistics Canada (1998a), "In 1995, 44% of the Aboriginal population was below statistics Canada's low income cut-offs, compared with the national rate of 20%" (p. 24). In addition, those Aboriginal people who were working experienced lower earnings.

> Average earnings of full-year, full-time Aboriginal workers ($29,684) were 21% lower than the national average, while those of the other Aboriginal earners ($10,866) were 29% lower. . . . Aboriginal people who lived on a reserve reported average employment income of $14,055, which was 24% below the $18,463 reported by those who lived off the reserve. (Statistics Canada, 1998a, p. 12)

> The average earnings of Aboriginal people were lower in every age and education category. In addition, they had significantly larger concentrations in the age groups and education levels that are associated with lower earnings. . . . About 40% of Aboriginal earners had not completed high school, compared with only about 25% of earners in the general population. (p. 12)

> On the whole, these differences in work patterns, age and education accounted for about three-fifths of the total difference between the average earnings of the Aboriginal population and the national average. (p. 12)

Levels of Education Among Aboriginal People

Statistics Canada (1998c) claimed that "Aboriginal people are making gains in educational attainment for populations aged 20 to 29. However, they are experiencing little, if any, improvement relative to the non-Aboriginal population" (p. 11).

> In 1996, Aboriginal people 15 years of age and over continued to have much lower levels of schooling than the non-Aboriginal population, regardless of age group. Over one-half (54%) of the Aboriginal population aged 15 and over had not received a high school diploma, compared with 35% of the non-Aboriginal population. At higher levels of attainment, 4.5% of Aboriginal people were university graduates with degrees or certificates, compared with 16% of the non-Aboriginal population. (p. 11)

> As with the non-Aboriginal population, education was an important determinant of labor force participation and unemployment among Aboriginal people. Among Aboriginal people aged 25 to 44 who were not attending school, the participation rate was 92% for those with a university degree or certificate, compared with 61% for those with less than high school. Unemployment rates for the same populations were 7% and 31%, respectively. (p. 12)

> Although overall education levels remain lower for young Aboriginal adults, census data provide evidence that Aboriginal people have a greater tendency than non-Aboriginal individuals to return to school as adults. (p. 12)

Aboriginal Children Population Increase

Aboriginal people are strongly overrepresented in what are commonly considered negative areas, including low education levels, low income and low earnings, and high proportions of the Native adult population in custody. At the same time, "the Aboriginal population in 1996 was 10 years younger on average than the general population. Over the next two decades, this will be reflected in large increases within the Aboriginal working-age population" (Statistics Canada, 1998b, p. 3). Unless the current reasons for these trends are corrected, the population increase will likely increase the number of people in custody, unemployed, and earning substandard wages.

Alberta Achievement Test Results

The statistics above demonstrate that the social, educational, and income circumstances of Native people are desperate compared to those of mainstream Canada. A large variety of possibilities require investigation to find a solution. However, it can be speculated that a lack of school achievement may be one factor. Thus, there may be a need to increase Native student educational achievement. A clearer view of school achievement can be found by reviewing the results of students in Alberta band-operated schools on the provincial achievement tests. The tests were written in English and are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 (Alberta, 1998). The tables below identify the percentage of students in band-operated schools who meet the acceptable and/or the excellence standard in the Alberta achievement tests. This is a report of students who reached either standard; it does not show actual test results.

Table 1 illustrates that in all grade levels, and in all but one subject area, the majority of Native students tested did not meet the minimum achievement standard targeted by Alberta Learning. Table 2 shows that the standard of excellence in the Achievement Testing Program was rarely reached. The Alberta Learning target is for 15% of students to reach the standard of excellence in each subject. The highest percentage of Native students reaching the standard of excellence in any subject area was 1.4% in Grade 3 math. In 15 out of a possible 30 test areas, very few Native students reached the excellence level. Most of these occurred in Grade 3, and 0.5% of Native students was the highest achievement rate in Grade 6 or Grade 9.

Table 1

Percentage of Students in Band-Operated Schools Meeting the Acceptable Standard in the Achievement Testing Program, 1995-1997*

	Grade 3			Grade 6			Grade 9		
Subject	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
English language arts	27.4	29.6	31.1	23.6	22.2	25.9	28.9	38.4	34.3
Math	46.8	48.6	50.8	18.5	22.7	32.1	9.2	6.6	4.9
Science**	N/A	N/A	N/A	23.4	18.1	16.2	16.9	18.2	14.0
Social studies	N/A	N/A	N/A	18.6	9.2	16.6	13.7	23.6	22.2

*For these achievement tests, 85% of Alberta students writing the test are expected to meet the acceptable Standard.
**In 1995-96 there were two forms of the science test. The results for these forms have been combined.

Table 2

Percentage of Students in Band-Operated Schools Meeting the Standard of Excellence in the Achievement Testing Program, 1995-1997*

	Grade 3			Grade 6			Grade 9		
Subject	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
English language arts	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Math	1.4	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0
Science**	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Social studies	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.4

* For these achievement tests, 15% of Alberta students writing the test are expected to meet the standard of excellence.
**In 1995-96 there were two forms of the science test. The results for these forms have been combined. (Alberta Learning, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that the Alberta achievement tests are held yearly, little research has been done in regards to reserve Native student results on these test. Given the importance placed on these results by parents, community leaders, and the Alberta government, it is appropriate to examine the results in greater detail. This study identified the main factors that enhance and hinder reserve Native student performance in school, as identified by the results on the Alberta provincial achievement test. This was accomplished by conducting a survey of teachers, principals, and administrators who work with Native students. It is hoped that the understanding arising from this study will support improvements in teaching approaches, school programming, and the creation of strategies for future testing. For the purpose of this study, *success* was defined as achieving the provincial acceptable standard as defined by Alberta Learning.

The main problem studied was: **What are the factors that enhance or hinder Alberta Native reserve student performance in school as measured by results on the Alberta provincial achievement test?**

The following related questions were also investigated:

1. What contributes to Alberta Native reserve students' success on the Alberta provincial achievement test?

2. What contributes to a lack of success for Alberta Native reserve students on the Alberta provincial achievement test?

3. What strategies can be used to improve Native reserve students' performance on these tests?

4. How do the results compare to teachers' perceptions of their students' school skills?

5. How are test results used by educators to refine, develop, or change programming and school goals?

6. What are the perceptions of the educators of Alberta Native reserve students about the value and appropriateness of the Alberta provincial achievement test?

7. Are Native reserve students being taught the Alberta curriculum?

Significance of this Study

Native communities are increasingly moving out of what some Aboriginals have referred to as "a time of darkness" (Dogrib Divisional Board of Education, 1991). Years of dependency on federal government systems and personnel are gradually being replaced by self-government initiatives (Barnaby, 1991). Many Native communities now have degrees and variations of self-government and a greater control of decision making (Hedican, 1997). To implement self-government practices, they are looking to their own people to manage and administer programs. The success of this endeavour will be, in part, dependent on competencies learned in school. In fact, the education of Native children is seen as a fundamental tool in developing and strengthening the Native right to self-government (Government of Canada, 1996). This empowerment and control will have little authentic meaning if the communities are run by Native people without skills or if they are required to employ outside consultants to administer their organizations. Such hollow empowerment is the contemporary equivalent to the 17th-century trading of trinkets for life-sustaining furs. It is also not an effective prescription for self-sufficiency. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples reported that many Native leaders believe that "Aboriginal nations cannot rebuild their political institutions, manage their economics, or staff their social services without trained people. Yet high school and university completion rates are low among Aboriginal youth" (Government of Canada, 1996, p. 45).

In the context of self-governing processes, the school success of Native students has taken on a new and more critical meaning. In addition, the desperate social and educational circumstances that are currently experienced in Native communities point to a need to study Native educational achievement. Therefore it was appropriate to study the issue of student performance as related to the provincial achievement test. This study should provide band and education councillors, parents, community members, government agencies, researchers, teachers, and principal with information on the key informants' perceptions of why Alberta Native students are successful or unsuccessful on the Alberta provincial achievement test. The descriptions of successes, failures, and difficulties may illuminate ideas and processes for change or provide encouragement for existing success. This thesis also identifies constraints and barriers, which can be a basis

for further research or provide information for school programming and goal setting as well as the development of classroom and community-based strategies. Such awareness may also promote open discussion on the issues of community school curriculum, requirements for success in school, and the appropriateness of this testing.

The theory, descriptions, and discussions that emerge from this thesis provide the opportunity for those involved in a Native student's education to consider these issues more meaningfully and with a common perspective. There is currently a shortage of academic research and practiced-centred Native community dialogue in the area of Native reserve students' school performance. Thus, this identification and defining of critical variables related to the issue have contributed to academic research. This topic was worth pursuing on the basis that it has developed theoretical understanding and contributed to professional practice (Newton & Rudestam, 1992) and that this study has offered suggestions towards school and teacher practices that may increase student achievement results on the Alberta provincial achievement tests. Alberta Learning has also been provided with the a copy of this dissertation.

During the interviews and literature reviews involved in this dissertation, it became apparent that much of the research and practices that are present in Native education exist largely in isolation. A few notable writers (e.g., Dehyle, Swisher) have created very useful and informative literature reviews that connect a number of critical concepts. These are significant resources. However, with the exception of the topic of Aboriginal cultural (e.g., Stairs) there is no overall framework that assembles the concepts, philosophies, and approaches into a practice-centred model. This dissertation organizes its own relevant findings and conclusions, and the current literature into such a model. The rationale for this has been further elaborated on in Chapter 6. The actual model is presented in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHOD

Overview

The initial difficulty for this study was establishing a consistent and meaningful yardstick for the comparison of Native student performance in school to the mainstream Canadian expectation. The Alberta provincial achievement tests measure student knowledge on the portions of the Alberta Learning curriculum tested, which provides a medium and a reference yardstick for researcher and participant dialogue. This dialogue was based on Native student educators' perceptions. These participants were determined in consultations with, and with permission from, the appropriate school principal and Director of Education. The study was enhanced by cross-cultural guidance from a Native professor. The cross-cultural nature of this project means that this was a critical element of the method and interpretation. Cross-cultural considerations are further discussed from time to time throughout this study.

The nature of the study was best suited to a qualitative research approach. The study elicited participant perception by utilizing interviews that I conducted. Guba (1981) stated that "both quantitative and qualitative methods should be used as the situation warrants" (p. 79). The provincial achievement test results provided a quantitative picture of Native reserve student education.

Polkinghorne (as quoted by Newton & Rudestam, 1992) described the qualitative method as especially useful in the "generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience" (p. 31). Consistent with the qualitative approach, interviews were face to face and of a semistructured style, and involved a series of nondirective, open-ended questions. The sampling was purposive, based on the needs of the study, and involved 20 key informants. Participants were educators of Native reserve students who had experience with the Alberta achievement test. At my request, and with the endorsement of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the principals of each school asked for staff volunteers from those teachers who were

familiar with the Alberta provincial achievement test. The questions were related to the problem statement but also general enough to allow for the interviewees to personalize their answers. The interviews took approximately one hour. In addition, I taped the interviews to ensure accurate data collection.

The study maintained relevance to the problem of study by using key informants directly involved in educating Native students. All qualitative text data were reviewed for a pattern. I sent the respondents my interpretation of the interview, in themes and reference quotations, to ensure accuracy (member checks). A self-addressed envelope was provided so that they could accept, reject, or change my interpretation.

The study's approach was also consistent with general qualitative interpretive philosophies that emphasize the emergence of themes. The basic process for interpretation was transcription, followed by the reading of the text and then the marking of interesting and related passages of transcript. The basis for organizing the critical transcript information was categorization. Any connection between categories was identified, and related groups were labelled as themes, which were arranged on a "themes table" and grouped for similarities. The qualitative need for consistency, known as *reliability* in quantitative research, was also maintained by a thorough and easy-to-follow coding of the data (Newton & Rudestam, 1992). The above required my judgment as a researcher about what was significant in the transcript. I analyzed, interpreted, and searched for meaning from the interviews. This was somewhat subjective and therefore required that I be careful in regards to minimizing researcher bias (Seidman, 1998). The overall goal of the above process was to "reduce and then shape the material into a form which could be shared or displayed" (p. 101). All methods endeavoured to be simple, to provide an audit trail, to allow the reader to review the raw data, and to make conclusions based on these data. This structured process used in the transcription analysis was conducted in a way that did not prevent ideas and themes from emerging from the transcripts.

As noted earlier, the process described above was in the context of researcher interpretation. Lincoln (1994) wrote that "objective reality can never be captured " (p. 2). Denzin (1994) commented that "the art of interpretation produces understandings that are shaped by genre, narrative, stylistic, personal, cultural, and paradigmatic conventions"

(p. 507). He also shared that there are major paradigms and perspectives that structure qualitative research. These Denzin listed as positivist and postpositivist, constructivist, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), and poststructuralist (ethnic, feminist, and cultural studies). Just the length and variety of this list makes the point that every researcher approaches a task with bias and preferred ways of seeing the world. The bias that a researcher brings to the tasks are largely unknown. However, researchers do have a personal epistemological perspective. I have not supported anyone's view exclusively, but have borrowed from a number of views in a way consistent with my personal epistemological perspective. However, I applied the qualitative principles of research ethics, sound methodologies, and efforts to maintain trustworthiness to this study.

The previous is a rather simple summary of the information-gathering procedure and analysis. However, the methodological considerations did not end with these academic understandings of the process. A number of ethical and technique issues were important considerations. The face-to-face nature of this study placed me in a social relationship with the participants, which was a difficult circumstance for an interviewer who needed to obtain cooperation and build rapport, yet remain neutral and objective (Glesne, 1992). The conversation sometimes became personal and misdirected to touch on confidential matters not necessarily related to the survey. In these cases I followed the principle that a good interviewer is nonjudgemental and monitors the pace, quality, and direction of the social interaction as well as the content of the answers and behaviour of respondents (Newman, 1994). In addition, I followed the qualitative practice of reflexivity by keeping notes on my ongoing perceptions of the research study. I also included in this dissertation and in the original dissertation proposal my personal underlying epistemological assumptions that were the basis for the methodologies and question design (Guba, 1981).

Perhaps one of the most important understandings maintained during research design, investigation, and interpretation has been written by Lather (1986), who stated, "Because we are not able to assume anything, we must take a self-critical stance regarding the assumptions that are incorporated into our empirical approaches. No longer does following the correct method guarantee 'true results'" (p. 65).

Personal Epistemological Perspective

As with all research, this study was executed under the constraints of participant and researcher perceptions. Johnson (1987) felt that researchers must "acknowledge their individual research perspectives, personal preferences, and utilize appropriate research strategies to maintain trustworthiness in their inquiry" (p. 223). The nature of the evolution and maturation of an individual's personal world view makes it difficult for that person to discuss it without providing a life-long autobiography. Limiting oneself to the critical and pertinent topics is difficult and perhaps inadequate. However, below is an incomplete and biased summary of viewpoints that may have impacted on my interpretation and manner of conducting this research.

To start with, my 15 years of teaching and administering in Native schools has been a preferred choice. In addition, it has also been my preference to raise my family in Native communities and in my own way explore Native cultural pursuits such as going on bush trips and owning dog teams, as well as spending a great deal of personal time volunteering in the community. This limited base of grassroots participation in a Native lifestyle has provided me with a very realistic, yet positive and optimistic view of the difficulty that Native communities, families, and individuals experience. It has also provided me with insight into the wonderful strengths within Native people and communities, as well as admiration for their understandings and ways of dealing with the world. This opportunity to participate intimately in the culture of others not only provides me with the opportunity for possible insight into their world, but also allows me to see my own world view. As Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) have written, "People are not likely to think of their own views as strange. Indeed it is only in contrast to other views that we come to understand our own " (p. 11). St. Denis (1992) extended this thought by quoting Katz and commenting that if one can risk the experience of vulnerability, defined as a "radical questioning of one's world view," then the researcher will be able to "better gain access to a different framework and therefore a deeper understanding" (p. 60).

A more focused view of my personal epistemology contains the following: (a) An individual does not need a formal education to possess insight, wisdom, and skill; (b) schools can be critical agents in facilitating the success of Native families, communities, and individuals; (c) families and individuals hold the final solution to their

own problems; (d) Native people have the right to community self-control, self-determination, and self-government; (e) these previous conditions are the basis for responsible communities; and (f) the implementation of practice-orientated solutions are not simple matters.

Trustworthiness

The data-gathering and analysis process described earlier is only as valuable as its trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was a constant consideration throughout the study. In this research, cross-cultural considerations may affect trustworthiness and thus were a priority. Therefore this dissertation provides a brief consideration of the cross-cultural aspect of this study. The study was also supported by a literature review that outlined research that is similar or related to this study, and comparisons are made as appropriate.

Denzin (1994), citing Guba, noted that trustworthiness consists of four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Guba (1981) suggested that qualitative research should use triangulation, reflexivity, and member checks as a minimum when establishing trustworthiness. With this in mind, I designed the survey instrument to express some of the same questions in different ways so that these might validate each other. Oral probing was also utilized as appropriate. I returned to a selection of the participants, in person, by phone, or by mail to validate the themes that I believed I had found, and for the opportunity to acquire additional information. This is referred to as the testing of credibility or member checks (Guba; as cited in Denzin, 1994). In addition, a sample size of 20 educators chosen from five different schools not only provided a great deal of information, but also served as a form of triangulation.

A multimethod approach was not employed, but data were enhanced in a limited way by being triangulated by interviewing different community and district educators in different roles (e.g., teachers, principals, vice-principals, directors, counsellors). This ensured that focus was maintained and provided a variety of viewpoints and related descriptions for the study.

Each participant was asked the same questions. This consistency added to the dependability of the results. The fact that the research was conducted in the participants' community aided in establishing comfort and trust from the viewpoint of the community

educators involved. This ensured that the participants provided information that was important to them and not what they believed the researcher would like to hear. This enhanced research confirmability.

Despite these precautions, it was possible for potential difficulties to arise during the research. One was the potential reluctance of a participant to engage in a research project initiated by a noncommunity person. This may be true of any participant, but an additional dynamic may be present between a Native participant and a non-Native researcher. A portion of those interviewed in this study were Native. As Bradburn (as cited in Newman, 1994) stated, "Interviewer characteristics . . . such as sex and race may make a substantial difference for attitude questions related to these characteristics" (p. 250). Given that qualitative studies assign meaning in a social context, this was a potentially significant constraint. In this study, I attempted to offset participant cross-cultural concerns by revealing, on the consent form, my 15 years of experience working and living in Native communities. In addition, a relaxed approach that began with neutral, nonthreatening, or noncontroversial dialogue was used.

Another potential trustworthiness issue related to the constraints in cross-culture work is that there may have been misunderstandings due to the fact that some of the Native participants and I have been raised in different cultures and with different world views, which may have influenced the likelihood of achieving a meaningful exchange. Similarly, the non-Native educators being interviewed may have interpreted and reported the circumstances that they encountered from a cross-cultural perspective. Therefore the honest and sincere perspective and understanding of a non-Native teacher may have been clouded by cross-cultural misunderstanding. However, just because a viewpoint is from a cross-cultural perspective does not mean that it is in error.

A third potential difficulty is that educators may have been suspicious as to the intent of this inquiry into their students' success or lack of success. This third difficulty was resolved by establishing a nonthreatening setting and a relaxed interviewee-researcher relationship. In addition, all participants were asked whether they would like an executive summary of the report and were told the measures that I would employ to ensure confidentiality.

I also did everything possible to control for bias. This is a consideration in any research effort because social and organizational experience, cultural heritage, and personality characteristics are an important determinant of perception (Johnson, 1987). In this study another possible source of bias was that related to my previous experience in Native education. This experience may be a strength, but also may have biased my expectations and interpretation of the interview. Therefore, as much as possible I made a conscious effort to maintain neutrality. However, a qualitative researcher considers it impossible to completely eliminate the influence of researcher bias because of unavoidable differences due to differing cultural and life experiences. According to Hedican (1997), it is not necessary that a researcher be free of bias in order to carry out a study, only that care be taken that these biases do not become integral factors that influence the results of the research. However, any forms of prejudice would not be acceptable.

An overall orientation towards maintaining trustworthiness was a central integrity of the study. It must pertain to all aspects of the work. Guba's (1981) overview of trustworthiness was followed as much as possible during this research study: "It is likely that triangulation and member checks (for credibility), thick description (for transferability), leaving an audit trail (for dependability), and triangulation and practicing reflexivity (for confirmability) are the minimums that should be required of naturalistic investigators" (p. 88).

Assumptions and Special Considerations

To increase the likelihood that possible difficulties would be dealt with effectively, the critical assumptions that were inherent in this research were identified at the beginning of the study. The three basic assumptions are listed below, followed by the means that were used to ensure that these necessary circumstances were present.

1. The educators selected would be willing and honest participants in this research.

2. In the case of Native-born educators, the participants and I would be able to communicate effectively in the English language. This recognizes the potential for difficulties in cross-cultural relationships and possible second-language limitations.

3. The non-Native educators being interviewed would be able to view their students in a way that was free of bias and cultural misunderstanding, and the researcher would have the insight to adjust for these cultural misunderstandings, if necessary.

To increase the likelihood of conducting a successful study, my relationship with the participants was facilitated in the following ways:

1. I recognized and respected the participants' formal and informal cultures.

2. I conducted research in a manner comfortable to the participants' current lifestyle, personal, and work circumstances.

3. I pursued the research project in a scholarly manner, demonstrating academic rigor, ethics, and dedication befitting a doctoral research study. This was based on related literature in this area and feedback and monitoring from a University of Alberta Graduate Studies Doctoral Candidacy Committee.

Limitations and Delimitations

There were a number of limitations inherent in this study, one of which was the difficulty in narrowing the complex issue of school achievement to a narrow set of answers. However, given the critical role that education can play in the future of Native individuals and communities, some effort to identify and share the positive and negative characteristics of school success, as well as possible alternatives, was seen as appropriate. This view recognizes that each community is unique in values, goals, and historical experiences. In fact, the qualitative research methodology approach used in this study recognizes the multiple realities that exist in the world and therefore in this study (Glesne, 1992). This is also consistent with an important Native principle that upholds individual community independence and uniqueness (Duran & Duran, 1995). The ideas and any recommendations generated in this study adhere to this principle. Therefore the ideas and recommendations of this study are offered only as suggestions and may not be applicable to an individual community. In these cases it is hoped that this study will serve as a stimulation for community-based ideas and the refinement of existing strategies. In addition, it is recognized that neither success in school nor success on provincial achievement tests will serve as a panacea for all that may be dysfunctional within a Native community or person.

The study was limited to the beliefs and perceptions of those educators surveyed and has kept within the context of their experiences. Therefore, their perceptions may not be consistent with those of all educators of Native students from the community involved. It also may not be congruent with the perceptions of Native student educators from other communities. The study did not have the benefit of the perceptions of parents, band councillors, or other Aboriginal people who are not educators. It will therefore not be appropriate to transfer the findings from this study to the experiences of other educators, the individuals who participated, or the general public. Guba (1981) referred to this as *transferability*. He explained that transferability is dependent upon the degree of similarity between two contexts. He also stated, "The naturalist does not attempt to form generalizations that hold in all times and in all places, but to form working hypothesis that may be transferred from one context to another depending upon the degree of fit between the contexts" (p. 81). Thus a significant contextual match may make these findings relevant for the communities involved, other communities, parents, principals, researchers, government agencies, and council members working in Native education.

A very important possible limitation may have existed because I was an outsider to the community and culture that was being studied. Similarly, a significant number of those interviewed were non-Native. They were involved with and questioned about Native people. Therefore, another possible limitation was that the interviewee's experiences and answers were given within a cross-cultural context. My experience and interpretations and those of interviewees may have been affected by cultural and personal differences.

Limitations to this study may also be present because of the unintentional biases related to my personal background and previous experiences. However, the fact that I have 15 years of continuous professional and personal experience living as an educator in Native communities reduces the chances that this limitation significantly compromised the study, However, the advantage of this related experience may have become a biasing influence when I attempted to understand and interpret the perceptions and experiences of the respondents. In this regard, personal viewpoints that could possibly impact on this study were reported in the Personal Epistemological Perspective section earlier in this dissertation.

This study also has a number of delimitations that should be recognized. The study was delimited to the specific band-controlled schools involved. It was delimited in respect to non-Native schools and Native urban students.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

The limitations discussed above point out significant cross-cultural considerations. Every study has the challenge of gaining accurate and meaningful information from the participants. However, this study has an additional cross-cultural limitation. I did not have complete knowledge of some participants' background and language subtleties. This applies particularly to Native educators who were involved in this study. This knowledge is critical to allow the researcher to relate to the communication being used, the context of phrases, and references and attitudes presented, and to look for the meaning of subtle hesitations. An understanding of all aspects of the complexities of the respondents' communication styles is required for the researcher to gain insight and develop meaningful two-way dialogue. This also provides a basis for sensitive and appropriate probing, atmosphere development, and accurate analysis. Without a positive and comfortable setting both environmentally and personally, the interview will be shallow at best.

In a cross-cultural setting the tasks described above are confounded by the differing backgrounds of the researcher and participants. The interviews in this study involved or were about people from a Native culture. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to detail all aspects of Native culture. However, it is beneficial to share a few points that relate to my approach to the cross-cultural nature of this study. Kehn and Cannell (1957; as cited in Fontana & Frey, 1994) stated that "it is also important to understand the respondent's world and forces that might stimulate or retard response" (p. 364). This is a critical point. My extensive experience with the Native Dogrib culture will be beneficial in this area. However, it is important to remember that someone who was not born and raised in a culture will always be extremely limited in his or her understanding of that culture. Moreover, a cross-cultural researcher will be very dependent on the interpretation of others for answers. This will be even greater than that encountered by the typical researcher.

This study involved communities from the Cree Nation. However, the communities were geographically as much as 600 km. apart. There may be commonalties between communities; however, they are far from being the same. Native communities view themselves as independent and are often unique in language, culture, and modern as well as historic experiences (Duran & Duran, 1995). This uniqueness also includes informal and formal protocols and attitudes towards sharing, aggression, mainstream society, and other Native groups. With all of these considerations, the task of conducting accurate cross-cultural research is very difficult. However, I found that a sincere and simple approach facilitated communication with the schools and participants involved. I attempted to adjust elements of my personality that seemed to match or not match the situation. But, overall, I tried to be my natural self. Fortunately, Native people, as in many cultures, are extremely appreciative of people who authentically try to "fit in." This is best done within the limitations of personal comfort and cultural backgrounds. Sincerity, honesty, and integrity are the cross-cultural worker's best safeguards. To achieve as much of an acceptance into the Native community as possible, I tried to become familiar with the background, values, philosophies, priorities, protocols, and general lifestyle of the people. To assist in this process, I have begun the literature review with a discussion of crucial literature related to this objective.

Ethical Considerations

The location and participants for this study involved Native communities in Alberta. Therefore, none of the participants had a casual or formal relationship with me. Each was provided with both a written and an oral presentation of the purpose and method of the research. A consent form was used that reminded the participants that they were free to withdraw at any time without consequences. The participants' free choice to be involved or decline involvement was assured and protected throughout the study. Quotations that have been used are not identified or traceable to the source. Confidentiality was present to the extent that no one else was aware of the participants' responses. In the published form the participants' identities are not revealed, and every effort was made to make identities untraceable. However, it must be noted that these were small communities with areas for confidential meetings, but no areas for secret meetings. In addition, others from the community approved this study. Thus, others knew that the

study was taking place and might be able to make inferences about who was involved. It is likely that the participants themselves are aware of this limitation. In addition, anonymity from me was not possible. However, this topic did not evoke personal discussions or controversial opinions.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

> We have a vision of the sort of country we want to live in, and to build in collaboration with other Canadians. It is certainly not the sort of country we have now, one in which our people have been relegated to the lowest rung on the ladder of Canadian society; suffer the worst conditions of life, the lowest incomes, the poorest education and health; and can envision only the most depressing of futures for our children. (George Erasmus; as cited in Hedican, 1997, p. 14)

Approaching Native Research

The quotation above strongly demonstrates that the Aboriginal people have a vision for their people, as well as a position and circumstance that are unique in Canada. This research project is in the context of this Aboriginal circumstance. For me, and many readers, this creates a cross-cultural effort. Therefore, to be effective and appropriate during researching and analysis, this literature review contains selected literature that provides related Native historical, cultural, and contemporary background. This knowledge helps the researcher understand what influences Native students in terms of their decisions, expectations, what they may be prepared to do, and how they might be best supported by their educational partners.

Duran and Duran (1995) claimed that "the study of cross-cultural thought is a difficult endeavor at best; the outcome of cross-cultural study may be the depreciation of culture rather than its legitimate analysis from another viewpoint" (p. 5) . Thus during this study avoiding the unintentional depreciation of culture and the oversimplifying of cross-cultural differences was a priority. As in many things, the intent, approach, and process determine authenticity and appropriateness, as well as the likelihood for success.

Consequence of Colonization

Duran and Duran (1995) stated that without a proper understanding of Aboriginal history, those who practice in the disciplines of applied social sciences operate in a vacuum and thereby perpetuate neocolonialism. Duran and Duran presented some of the effects of colonization as intergenerational post-traumatic stress disorder, which is related

to the impact of colonialism and thus rooted in the following historical stages: first contact, economic competition, invasion and war, subjugation and reservation, boarding school, and forced relocation and termination (Duran & Duran, 1995). To reduce these devastating experiences to a handful of sentences is also an injustice. However, because of the limitations of this dissertation, it has been necessary to point out the impact superficially with little detail. However, the effect of the above was a constant consideration throughout this study.

It is worth noting that education is negatively impacted by all hostile experiences encountered by Native people. In particular, the boarding-school period resulted in severe mistrust, resentment, and misunderstanding of modern educational practices and intentions. This is not surprising when it is considered in light of the horror of residential-school physical, emotional, and sexual cruelties and abuse. The effects of these haunt individuals, families, and whole communities to this day. In addition, the removal of children from the home for at least large portions of the school year resulted in generations of people growing up without the example and experience of being parented. A similar loss is seen by the effects of absentee parents because of addictions to alcohol and the pathologies brought about as a result of the crippling psychological consequences of colonialism and discrimination—as Duran and Duran (1995) described above, intergenerational post-traumatic stress disorder. Skills normally passed between generations are lost, and personal and family dysfunctions, fears, and inadequacies are passed between parents and their children.

Chief Plenty Coups (as cited in Garcia, 1988) stated, "Education is your most powerful weapon. With education you are the white man's equal; without education you are his victim " (p. 15). With ideas such as these in mind, many residential-school parents sent their own children to residential schools, making tremendous personal sacrifices for the sake of future Native generations. They also decided that their children would endure, suffer, and, to at least some degree, grow to be different from their ancestors. These parents made the radical and heart-wrenching decision to be separated from their children for months and years at a time. They sacrificed their relationships, they risked losing the parent-sibling bond that enriches the lives and spirit of most people, and they knowingly asked for their children to be molded into people different from themselves. What they

did not expect was what happened. Many of their children returned as hurt, emotionally scarred adults dislocated from their culture, family, and ancestors; they became trapped between two worlds; and they did not have the skills required to contribute meaningfully to either society. This disposition and absence of skills has an horrendous impact on the ability of these parents to be supportive and capable school partners for their children. However, it should be noted that there are also many Native people who claim to have benefited from the residential school experience. In addition, many Native parents and community leaders who feel that their experience was negative have found the strength to learn new work and personal skills and to move forward in spite of the experience they endured.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal People

In 1991 the Canadian government commissioned a committee to investigate the contemporary circumstances of Canadian Aboriginal people. The summary document *People to People, Nation to Nation* (Government of Canada, 1996) has been published by this commission. This document provides simple and practical directives for most aspects of contemporary Native life that are based around four principles: recognition, respect, sharing, and responsibility. An important part of the commission's solutions are Native self-government and responsibility for meaningful education systems. The commission also remarked that

> abuse and family violence are the most dramatic problems, but they are the tip of an iceberg that began to form when Aboriginal communities lost their independent self-determining powers and Aboriginal families were deprived of authority and influence over their children. . . . Child welfare is one of the services that Aboriginal people want most to control for themselves. (pp. 63-64)

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996), Aboriginal people want two things from education:

> They want schools to help children, youth and adults learn the skills they need to participate fully in the economy. They want schools to help children develop as citizens of Aboriginal nations with the knowledge of their languages and traditions necessary for cultural continuity. . . . The present education system does not accomplish either of these goals. (p. 82)

Value Orientation

Complicating a Native person's ability to reconcile the hostile experiences of the past with the needs of today's modern world are differences in values. In this study *value orientation* refers to complex but definitely patterned principles that give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of common human problems (Kluckholn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Non-Native involvement in Aboriginal education is further confused by the different perspective that Native people hold in regard to core values. Lyden (1988) explained that a person's particular configuration of values emerges from the experiential growth of his or her personality within the framework of the specific cultural milieu. These values form the foundations for expressions of opinion and behaviour, and thus the different ways of thinking about life and the world. According to Leithwood (1992), values act as substitutes when individuals do not have the knowledge that the situation requires.

As with any society, these values provide its members with a shared purpose in life as demonstrated in custom, ritual, and symbols. Collectively, this is seen as culture and provides a society with a shared world view that addresses the basic categories of understanding of common concepts (Shade & Robinson, 1997, p. 29). Attneaves (as cited in Shade & Robinson, 1997) claimed that the pivotal elements of culture are in five specific orientations: (a) relationships of humans to the environment, (b) time orientation, (c) interactions with people, (d) an idealized state of being, and (e) the inherent nature of mankind. Relationships with nature appear to be an extremely significant basis for Native culture. In non-Native terms, it is a metaphysical belief system based on the principle of living in harmony with nature and within the tribal community. This also is shown in the humbling of self and tribe in relation to the natural environment, along with the recognition of the significant importance of Mother Earth and the Creator. "These beliefs in harmony, along with a humbled sense of self, allow the American Indian society to function in an orderly and controlled manner" (p. 29). This is in contrast to mainstream society, which often stresses the controlling and harnessing of the environment.

It is difficult to explain in mainstream Canada's terms, but in my experience it is apparent that the land facilitates competency and self-esteem; it heals and it nurtures Native people. It accomplishes goals that any education system would be proud to

achieve. Brant (1990) has commented that Native people have maintained an incredibly strong reverence for and attachment to their land. Brant wrote that

> Natives are products and extensions of the land, and the vestiges of Native ethics and rules of behavior, which continue to promote group unity and survival on Native lands, will not easily or soon be relinquished, even if the consequence of persistence in the old forms of behavior is to be removed from competitiveness, and success in the dominant non Native culture. (p. 538)

More often than not, the Native orientation to a value concept is very different from that of the non-Native-dominated school system. However, it should be remembered that these value positions are often influenced by modernization and the pressures of pragmatic matters such as employment, survival, and material needs, all of which may impact on decisions and behaviour (Lyden, 1988, p. 843). Therefore it is unlikely that the real-life expression of a value will be according to the textbook definition. What is seen in the everyday life of the Native children may not be the highly valued ideal Native. Powerful forces that act upon the real-life expression of values include personal, family, and community dysfunctions such as drug and alcohol addictions; the consequences of physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse; and the absence of the required understanding and skills that the modern world demands.

Despite the above challenges to the Native ideal, many communities have competent, literate, and wise community-born Native and non-Native workers. However, a practical caution came from Ryan and Robinson (1990), who stated, "The effects of missionisation and schooling have taught a number of generations of adults to denigrate themselves, their abilities, their strengths and their wisdom" (p. 62). Therefore, processes may be required to help the community regain confidence and skills. In contrast, George Erasmus (as cited in Hedican, 1997) has contended, "We know from bitter experience that others do not know what is best for us. We are engaged in a fight we will never give up, a fight to lift ourselves above our present problems" (p. 157).

Community Uniqueness

It is not only mainstream Canadian society and Aboriginal cultures that have differences. Within the broad category of Canadian Aboriginal people there are over 50 language groups, each having a number of communities, often with differing dialects.

Just as the language varies from community to community, so do the value orientations, protocols, successes, and failures experienced by them. Each community must be understood and related to on its own terms. For example, a Dogrib man once mentioned to me that anyone not Dogrib (including other Aboriginal people) was considered a foreigner and thus strange to the culture. Each Dogrib community strongly favours employing people from its own community before other Dogribs. In addition, two Dogrib communities only 125 kilometres apart have passionately debated the oral and written vocabulary used in educational Dogrib language curriculum materials. There is a kinship and bond between the Dogrib communities, but loose lines are drawn and negotiated. These kinships can also often be defined on the basis of family lines. In addition, the bond is also exercised and neglected on the basis of pragmatic and political circumstances. Communities that border tribal regions and urban centres have a greater number and type of mixed relationships. They have many central ideologies but also fragmented goals and are often even more unique in character, priorities, and values. These circumstances impact on community, family, and student school performance expectations and goals.

Value Clashes in the School

Cultural values are manifested in Native values and rules of behaviour. It is not possible to outline all of the intimate elements and dynamics of how values are expressed in these forms. However, a few examples and a discussion of the implications for cross-cultural difficulties may be enlightening. According to Brant (1990), a Native psychiatrist, cultural differences between Natives and non-Native psychiatrists often result in misinterpretation and therefore false diagnosis. This view could easily be applied to non-Native educators with Native students. Brant stated that

> many general psychiatrists see Native children and adolescents in assessment, and often find them passive, difficult to assess, and not forthcoming. This behavior, which affects the individual Native child's attitude and performance in an assessment situation, is understandable in view of the child's cultural background. The psychiatrist may, at times, misinterpret the behavior as resistance, passive-aggression, opposition, depression, or withdrawal. The general psychiatrist's failure to recognize the derivatives of the individual child's cultural heritage as they affect his behavior in a clinical situation may result in unperceived errors in diagnosis, in formulation, and in treatment. For example,

> overuse of antidepressants and the all too frequent diagnosis of personality disorders may occur. This may turn what is intended to be a helpful encounter into one that is not useful or even traumatic for the patient. Such encounters will no doubt also be frustrating for the clinician. (p. 534)

Some of these Native values and rules of behaviour are obvious in public ceremonies or traditional functions such as powwows. In daily life these seem to have been replaced by Euro-Canadian values and rules. However, in many instances the Native way has not been replaced, but "persists in disguised form as carryovers from the Aboriginal culture which strongly influences Native thinking and action even today " (p. 534) . This can explain misunderstanding, cross-cultural impasses, confusion, and the difficulty experienced by both cultures to relate and find common ground. It also creates tremendous frustration and dissonance within Native individuals and communities. Some important Native value topics, discussed by Brant within a non-Native paradigm, are conflict suppression, noninterference, noncompetitiveness, emotional restraint, sharing, the Native concept of time, the Native attitude toward gratitude and approval, Native protocol, the practice of teaching by modeling, projection of conflict, and the humiliating superego. In many cases Native values and their expression are complete opposites of what exists in mainstream Canadian society. Brant felt that the maintenance of traditional Native values and rules of behaviour, as manifested in Native child-rearing practices, will continue to have significant implications for Native mental health and education.

Supporting the significance of strong Native values in education is a study by Coggins, Radin, and Williams (1997), titled *The Traditional Tribal Values of Ojibwa Parents and the School Performance of Their Children,* which found that the presence of strong traditional Native values in the mother had a "beneficial impact on their children's academic and social performance in school" (p. 1). The authors concluded that "culture should be viewed as a tool, not an obstacle, in enhancing the school performance of American Indian Children" (p. 1).

Variability in Minority School Performance

It has been clearly established that Native and non-Native cultures are different. Thus the typical non-Native school experience encountered by a Native student will contain many culture conflicts. These have also been labelled as *cultural discontinuities*

(Ogbu; as cited in Jacob & Jordan, 1996). These cultural/language differences interact with teaching and learning in such a way as to cause difficulties for most minority students. However, Ogbu asked, "Why are some minorities successful in school even though they face the same barriers in culture, language, and post school opportunities faced by the minorities who are not successful? " (p. 87-88). Ogbu answered this question by pointing out that the main factor that differentiates the more successful from the less successful minorities appears to be the "nature of the history, subordination, and exploitation of the particular minority, and the nature of the minorities' own instrumental and expressive responses to the treatment they experience" (p. 88).

Ogbu (as cited in Jacob & Jordan, 1996) explained this by identifying three types of minorities in cross-cultural studies. One is autonomous minorities, who may possess a distinctive ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural identify, but are not socially, economically, or politically subordinated; however, they are also not entirely free from prejudice and discrimination. These minorities typically do not encounter disproportionate and persistent problems in learning, partly because they have a belief that encourages school success. Examples of these groups are Jews and Mormons in United States or Canada.

The second group of minorities are immigrants who have voluntarily moved to a new country for what they believed would be greater economic well-being, greater political freedom, and an increased overall quality of life. They often experience language and cultural difficulties in school. However, as people who made a decision to leave their homeland and challenge themselves in a new world, they are prepared for minority discrimination and other disadvantages. Therefore they do not experience prolonged, disproportionate school failure.

The third group of minorities are "caste like or involuntary minorities" (Ogbu; as cited in Jacob & Jordan, 1996, p. 92). These are people originally brought into the dominant society involuntarily (e.g., through slavery, conquest, or colonization). They have been denied true assimilation and allowed only menial positions. Native people are examples of the involuntary minority. This affects how minority children perceive and respond to schooling, and they typically encounter disproportionate and persistent problems in learning. Ogbu, in establishing the above categories and the related features,

made a point of stating that this is not meant to be stereotyping and that there are individual and subgroup differences within a minority.

The Native population has been controlled through various institutions, including school. In response to this controlling influence, certain secondary cultural differences emerge. Secondary cultural characteristics are not original to the distinct culture, but rather are adaptations created by the group being involuntarily dominated by another. These secondary cultural differences are often found with characteristics that relate to coping, perceiving, and feeling, particularly in regard to their relationship with the dominant group. The new adaptations may involve reinterpretation of their original or primary cultural differences or may involve the creation of new ones (secondary). Some of these emerge as differences in specific processes (e.g., cognition, communication, interaction, and learning), and/or a tendency toward cultural inversion (e.g., rejecting of certain behaviours, rituals, and symbols associated with the dominant culture), and claiming other forms of behaviours and rituals as appropriate for their culture, such as those opposite to the dominant groups (Ogbu; as cited in Jacob & Jordan, 1996):

> Thus what the minorities consider appropriate or even legitimate behaviors or attitudes for themselves are defined in opposition to the practices and preferences of White Americans, . . . and they do so in reaction to the way that dominant group members treat them in social, political, economic, and psychological domains. (pp. 94-95)

This oppositional social identity is a reaction to their perception of the dominant culture's oppression as collective and enduring. The barriers have been demonstrated as long term and deeply rooted in society. They are also aware that they cannot escape their birth-ascribed membership in a subordinate group by returning to a homeland, as is the option for the voluntary immigrants. They may therefore develop different methods and beliefs in regard to achieving success. In addition, as long-term or original inhabitants, they have no tolerance for discrimination directed at them. They harbour a deep distrust of schools. There is a reluctance to transcend cultural/language barriers or to "act White." This appears to begin at the elementary-school level and increases through junior and senior high schools (Ogbu; as cited in Jacob & Jordan, 1996). Therefore even when involuntary minorities are capable of succeeding, the above shapes the school strategies that involuntary minority students employ. These strategies are usually the least effective

in promoting good social and academic skills. Ogbu listed the following as strategies of involuntary minority parents and communities:

> Among the strategies of involuntary minority parents and community are the following: active or passive confrontation with the schools; verbal encouragement but non-teaching involvement with children's education/school learning; continual quest for "better education," involving collective struggle; unconsciously teaching children ambivalent attitudes about education and success in adult life or in the opportunity structure; a weak control of children's use of time; a weak socialization of children to develop good academic work habits and perseverance at academic tasks; and a weak sanction of academic instrumental behavior and academic responsibility. On the part of the children, involuntary minority students do not develop or maintain good academic work habits and attitudes; they tend to have a norm of minimum effort, do not work hard, and spend limited time on academic tasks; they avoid taking "hard/difficult/White" courses; they tend to be satisfied with average grades; although the children may do their homework, they do not routinely study; they do not usually separate academic tasks from other activities; they seem to prefer peer solidarity to schoolwork and easily submit to peer pressures that take them away from their schoolwork; they distrust school authorities with whom they are frequently in conflict; and they have a tendency to resist following school rules and standard practices. (p. 104)

Bicultural Ambivalence

If the students do not turn inward to their own culture or create secondary cultural characteristics, as described earlier, they may develop a bicultural ambivalence. The students are not interested in either culture. They reject their own culture because they see it as being in the weaker position. It is looked down on, ridiculed, and seen as inferior. At the same time the dominant culture often requires skills and values foreign to the Native youth. Thus the course of action that creates the least personal dissonance is to display disinterest in either culture (Cummins, 1988). Complicating this is institutionalized racism, in which schools continually blame the victims for school failures. Teachers and administrators point out alcohol abuse, poor hygiene, and a lack of middle-class rearing practices as justifications for the students' unsuccessful school experiences. Even when educators do not mean to discriminate or to legitimize system failure, subtle, unintentional forms of institutional racism exist that victimize the Native child. Examples of these are culturally biased tests that are administered for standard or diagnostic school-testing needs. Often these tests fail to assess the students' academic

potential based on successes or failures in their own more familiar culture. Assessments should be broadened beyond standardized tests toward focusing on the child's entire learning environment. Informal assessment that can consider more aspects of the child's learning processes and cultural circumstances should be also be used (Cummins, 1988).

Traditional Knowledge

As with most cultures, Aboriginal people place a high value on their historical ontology. Part of what Aboriginal people hold as knowledge comes from thousands of years of accumulated learning. This is referred to as traditional knowledge and is most often accepted by Western science as environmental knowledge. Some prefer the term *indigenous ecological knowledge*. This is based on the concept that the knowledge has been developed through generations of living in close contact with nature. It includes a system of classification, a set of empirical observations about the local environment, and a system of self-management that governs resource use and adapts to the new technological and socioeconomic changes of the present (Johnson, 1992). Johnson explained traditional knowledge with the words below. He claimed that Western science is often reluctant to accept traditional knowledge as valid because of its spiritual base,

> which they may regard as superstitious and fatalistic. What they often fail to recognize is that spiritual explanations often conceal functional ecological concerns and conservation strategies. Further, . . . the spiritual aspect does not necessarily detract from the Aboriginal harvester's ability to make appropriate decisions about the wise use of resources. It merely indicates that the system exists within an entirely different cultural experience and set of values, one that paints no more and no less valid a picture of reality than the one that provides its own frame of reference (Johnson and Ruttan, 1991). The spiritual acquisition and explanation of TEK is a fundamental component and must be promoted if the knowledge system is to survive. . . . In contrast to western science, TEK is more holistic than reductionist, subjective rather than objective, and experiential rather than positivist. . . . It has become hard for Western science to discredit the environmental knowledge of those who live so close to the land. However, respect for social, personal, and cognitive values and processes has yet to be substantially achieved. Native views are usually holistic, pragmatic, and intuitively based; and they see an extended and interrelated picture. Outsiders frequently fail to appreciate the complexity and interdependency of issues. Native analysis looks for behavioral observations rather than mathematics and qualitative rather than quantitative information, trends rather than numbers. (Wolfe; as cited in Johnson, 1992, pp. 12-13)

The above should be qualified by the comment that Western science has influenced many of the younger and middle-aged Native people. They may or may not hold the above views. Therefore they are likely either to be content with possessing one or the other mind set or to suffer a strong personal dissonance over the lack of clarity or integrity within their own views. In contrast to the unaccepting nature of Western science, Native people, in their pragmatic and welcoming tradition, recognize that Western science has value and support its input. Many Natives wish to see the merging of both traditional and contemporary Native knowledge with Western science in a harmonious manner that is beneficial to the community (Johnson, 1992).

Features of Native Education

Harmony requires a beneficial blending of all sides. Dogrib Elder Elizabeth Mackenzie (as cited in Brockman, 1996) thought that this could be accomplished: "If children are taught both cultures equally, . . . [then] . . . they will be strong like two people" (p. 22). She added that without education Native communities cannot become self-sufficient. This would be represented by a balance that includes a foundation of traditional understandings with a knowledge of the present and possible future. As she saw it, Native education should be in bush life and in books, for Native people and non-Native people. "Children need to know how people lived long ago, even the white people. It will make them stronger " (p. 22). Mackenzie's idea of knowing includes how to travel and work safely on the land. From an academic perspective, Native learning happens only when skills are fully and naturally experienced and the learning is experiential and holistic. Learning circumstances should also allow for a great deal of observation and experience with the task (Gilliland, 1995).

Culturally relevant books, videotapes, Native teachers' aides, and certified Native teachers improve the school circumstance, but they must be part of a meaningful Native-based educational process. Consistently, Native people have placed a high value on work with elders and small-group learning rather than large classes. Personal interaction during teaching is very important to Native people. In their article "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) identified Aboriginal Eber Hampton's important components of Native education as including spiritual relationships; diversity;

culture; communicating; continuing tradition; respect; Indian history; loss of the continent; continuing racial and political oppression and the consequences; relentlessness; recognizing the strength of Indian people and the culture of oppression; the importance of a sense of place, land, and territory; and committing to personal and societal change. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT, 1991) has tried to represent the above by following a culture-based school philosophy. This has progressively developed over the years. Originally, the life and principles of Aboriginal culture were represented in the schools in simple ways such as constructing buildings to achieve a visual blending with the community. Snowshoes, drums, and local crafts can be prominently displayed. Community and student photographs may be used as visual displays. These are all good ideas, but they are superficial attributes peripheral to the real needs. One need is culturally relevant education. The curriculum must reflect the values and experiences of Native children in content, method of instruction, and goals. However, in the modern Native world indigenous people constantly interact and seek employment, recreation, and leisure in the mainstream Canadian society. Thus the Native school curriculum must deal with the non-Native curriculum as well. Achieving harmony with both is not easy. However, some curriculum objectives are purely cognitive, affective, or social; in many of these cases the content is not the focus and can thus be anything suitable to the learner. Other goals may be content bound. Another learning concept that is important in culture-based teaching is that of building on the familiar to the unfamiliar; this is particularly important with young children. The failure to build on meaningful and personal community life experiences while teaching content, processes, and reading and writing is a significant reason for a lack of Native student success in the early years of school (GNWT, 1991).

Successful Native schools must go beyond relevant curriculum to the larger and more fundamental requirement of being culturally based. The Government of the Northwest Territories (1991) has written the following in *Our Children, Our Future*:

> In order for schooling to be relevant for students, it should recognize who the learners are and build on the experiences and strengths which they bring with them; it should understand all of their needs, including those which will be required for the world in which they will live as adults. Foremost, however, it should reflect their world view thus enabling them to make connections between home and school. Schooling, therefore, should incorporate and be shaped by the

> culture of individual communities, that is, it should be culture-based. . . . Culture-based schooling implies that decisions about educational activities at all levels are directed and driven by individuals and groups who represent the cultures of the N.W.T. Culture-based schooling recognizes the value of students' cultures and creates pride in them. Thus, it provides not only more meaningful school experiences for students, but also enhances their self-esteem and provides them with greater opportunities for success. (pp. 11-12)

The promotion of these goals is important because often Native school systems are dominated by non-Native teachers who offer foreign cultural-learning models. Teachers bring with them not only their knowledge, but also their culturally patterned ways of organizing and passing on that knowledge (Reyner, 1992). Even more fundamentally, they bring the value systems of their own communities in regards to what is important to learn and the methods most appropriate to learn. Teachers in a culture-based program have as their priority to establish classroom processes of learning and teaching that connect with the patterns of adult-child and child-child relationships expected by their students and the community (Stairs, 1995).

All school decisions, policies, procedures, curricula, teaching methodologies, and student and staff management procedures must not only reflect the local culture, but also be based on this culture. The principal does not make the directional decisions but acts as a consultant, allowing the people to make their own decisions. This can be achieved only if it is planned as a deliberate school strategy. However, this also requires a sufficient number of Aboriginal educators and a very close working relationship with community trustees and parents. These individuals are the medium needed to move schools from mere Native cultural inclusion to cultural-based schooling. Recently, the Government of the Northwest Territories (1991) adapted the term *cultural-based schooling* to *community-based*, recognizing that each community may be unique in composition, and thus the particulars of a cultural base and relevance may vary. This position also recognizes the central role that community members have in directing and participating in local education.

Factors Related to Dropping Out of School

Creating schools with a cultural and community base does not in itself guarantee success. Assuming that provincial achievement tests are one of many indicators of school success, it can be predicted that a continued lack of success on these tests will likely result in a student's leaving school before graduating. Therefore problems identified by Native school dropouts might reveal difficulties that relate to those performing low in achievement test. The province of Ontario commissioned a study, *Native Student Dropouts in Ontario Schools* (Mackay & Myles, 1989), which asked dropouts, parents, and Native and non-Native educators for their views on what contributes to Natives dropping out of secondary school. The findings were extensive and composed of 18 factors, each with a number of related issues or contributing factors. This description is very comprehensive and instructive for educators of Native students. Because of the limitations of this literature review, the 18 categories can only be listed in this literature review. When reading this list, the reader is cautioned that it is a list of categories. Therefore interpretation without considering all aspects of these issues may be misleading and/or inadequate. For example, the factor of poor or inadequate parental support is significant but is not necessarily only because of parent failings. The problem may be a result of many factors which involve all of school, community, family, and student failings or inadequacies, misunderstandings, and circumstances.

The major reasons for Native students dropping out of school, according to Mackay & Myles (1989), are (a) low English language skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking; (b) low academic achievement; (c) poor student staff relations; (d) inadequate parental support; (e) poor home and school communication; (f) effect of peer relationships; (g) inadequate future plans; and (h) curriculum not that is not seen as relevant (pp. 156-175).

Alberta Achievement Tests

The purpose of the Alberta provincial achievement test is to determine whether students are learning what they are expected to learn, report achievement compared to provincial standards, and assist schools, jurisdictions, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning (Alberta Learning, 1996).

These tests are written in language arts and mathematics in Grade 3, and in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in Grades 6 and 9. The tests are written in English or French depending on the student's school program. Aboriginal languages are in no way part of these tests. Students in Alberta reserve schools who write the test do so in English. The achievement tests are criterion referenced. That is, they are based on the provincial curriculum, which outlines what a student is expected to learn in a subject at each grade level. The results of these tests are reported under three critical categories. One is known as the acceptable standard, in which all students in this grouping have adequately learned the curriculum. The second group is known as the standard of excellence. Those students in this grouping have achieved at a level higher than the acceptable category. The third group consists of students who are not in either category, who are below the acceptable level of performance. Alberta Learning also provides specific summaries that list all district and school results, plus individual student results. There is also a diagnostic analysis computer program that can be used.

Alberta learning intends that the test results enhance student learning by offering information that can be carefully examined and interpreted to expose relative student weaknesses and strengths in academic achievement as related to those areas of the Alberta curriculum that are measured by written test. This information may then be used in planning for programs, teaching methodologies, and general student needs. Another use for this information is to inform schools and jurisdictions, parents, and the public about how well students may be doing in meeting local and provincial expectations. However, Alberta Learning cautions that the achievement tests assess only part of what is learned. These tests are only one of the indicators that can and should be used in assessing school effectiveness. Jurisdictions may feel that attendance, community and student involvement, and specialty programs are critical elements of student education. In addition, the personnel at the jurisdiction and school levels are to interpret, use, and communicate results in the local context (Alberta Learning, 1996).

Targets, Planning, and Local Focus

Alberta Learning has a number of strategies that are closely partnered to the analyzing of tests results. These are strategies to maintain or increase standards. Two important strategies are labelled *targets* and *local focus*. Targets are time-based goals that

are short term and reachable within the context of long-term goals. These may be progressive increments that guide people towards their desired outcomes. These serve to reinforce the commitment to the long-term goal or suggest the need for adjustment or change. The setting of these targets is very much influenced by a variety of sources of information such as graduation and achievement test results (Alberta Learning, 1996). In addition, the district and provincial goals are to be used only as guidelines for each school. Local schools will determine the specifics of how they will be achieved. The provincial expectation is that at least 85% of the students will achieve the acceptable standard on each test. It should be noted that some educators feel that the tests have or may wrongly become tools for assessing teacher and school competency.

Alberta Achievement Test Results

At this time Alberta Learning provides each school with a summary of the results. This comes in an overall profile that shows how many students have met the acceptable or the excellence standard and how many did not meet either standard. There is also a summary of how each question was answered by individual students. Each jurisdiction receives a profile on the schools under its care. Band-controlled schools receive reports on only their specific schools. At the time of this study Indian and Northern Affairs did not receive provincial achievement tests results. If they request the information, they are not given the results of individual schools but rather a breakdown organized by overall provincial results for band-operated schools and federally (Alberta) operated Native schools. At the time of this study there was only one federally operated Native school in Alberta. Therefore, this study does not single out any findings involving this school for reasons of confidentiality.

Despite parental expectations of a full and productive education for their children, as well, elders and community leaders call for their youth to be trained to become the community's doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, and other professionals (Sherwin, 1996). Native students' achievement in school is far too infrequent. This does not mean that schools, parents, and communities are not educating their children. Many important and significant efforts are taking place that are not measured on provincial achievement tests. Cultural programs and community language development are critical components of Native education in which students are demonstrating many high-level cognitive

processes, including critical thinking skills. These are not tested in the provincial achievement test. In addition, other mainstream Alberta curriculum objectives are not measurable by a written test. Thus if the only basis for considering a school's success and the ability of Native students is a series of written content-based tests, then the results will be based on insufficient information. However, parents, students, and the public at large currently place a high value on being competent in the specific skills of these tests.

Literature Review Conclusion

The ideas presented in this dissertation are intended to honour and respect Native people and their culture. However, it should be recognized that this review of the literature and the resulting synthesis and interpretation have been conducted by a non-Native author. Granted, I maintain significant professional, academic, and personal contact with Native individuals and communities. However, not to consider this possible limitation would be an academic and cross-cultural oversight. At the same time, a non-Native view is not necessarily wrong, inadequate, or incomplete.

The literature review is a necessary and beneficial starting place for this research. There have been many important concepts and factors discussed in this review. Yet, what is also valuable is what is not available in the review of the research. Compared to mainstream education, there is little actual research and very few practical solutions being offered to school leaders and/or teachers. This is not to discount the excellent research and insightful understandings of those who have been active researchers in Native Education. However, little of it is practice-centred, and with the exception of a handful of notable contributors, it exists in isolation to related work in the field.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis results have been summarized by question. For reading and interpretation convenience, issues have been summarized by key phrases and listed at the beginning of each corresponding question report. The number associated with each result is only a coding reference. This relates to transcript quotations for the purpose of creating an audit trail. Some of the results will be further reviewed in the discussion chapter.

Question 1

Do you have experience with the provincial student achievement tests? If yes, please describe.

Data Analysis Result(s):
1. Participants Experienced

Participants Experienced: This survey was limited to those educators recommended by the principals of each school surveyed. The approaches used by these principals were to arrange interviews with teachers who had experience with the provincial achievement test or who were preparing to conduct the test for the first time. One participant shared, "I've been administering them for, out of my seven years, I'd say about six. Grade Three all the time, every time." Another person commented, "Yes, administrating Grade Three tests for three years. Some marking experience." Most of those participants interviewed had a number of years of teaching experience. The majority of participants had administered the test a number of times. However, only a few had formal or workshop training in this particular test. Few of those interviewed were long-time educators of Native children, and only one was Native and originally from the home community being surveyed.

Question 2

The provincial student achievement tests are based on the provincial curriculum. Approximately what percentage of the Native students in your class (or classes) are learning the Alberta curriculum designed for their current age?

Data Analysis Result(s):	3. Majority of Students Are Behind
2. Alberta Curriculum (with modifications)	4. Provincial School Testing Prejudice

Alberta Curriculum(with modifications): Without exception, every teacher and principal stated that the Alberta curriculum was followed, planned for, and implemented at the regular curriculum/age-grade level (e.g., an 11-year-old being taught the Grade 6 curriculum). Further questioning supported this but also identified that a majority of the students were not able to work at this level and received modified programming. The usual approach was to have all students involved in teacher presentations of the correct age-grade curriculum, and then have those who were capable continue processing the content and skills as required by this curriculum. Students not at this level were given teacher-created assignments that modified the curriculum content, skills, and processing to the level of each lower student (often arranged in groups). This was particularly true in social studies and science. Math and reading were generally arranged as to the needs of individual students, and sometimes grouping was possible. Further comments that demonstrate the student learning and curriculum relationships are listed below:

> We'll do the topics, say in science, that are Grade 3, and I'll present the information to them, but when I'm asking them to do exams or regular assignments, my expectation is going to be that if I had maybe an average Grade 3 student, I might expect them to do a written paper for me, three or four paragraphs on a topic. But my kids, if I work and work, can get a paragraph. We do a lot of reading of the material and plus we answer questions, and we do some modified science activities and stuff. But their reading and their writing is weak, so I do a lot of oral with them. There'll be a lot of talking and discussing.

> Modify it. I'll have to explain things, for some of them in the language at their level. For definitions of words I have to—the best I can describe it is write it down a lot. A lot of it will be over their heads, but it depends on how you present it.

Grade 3 content. How they're dealing with it would be more of a Grade 2.

> Teaching the provincial curriculum, and modifying it for local relevance follows the curriculum religiously, . . . but only 75%-80% covered in a school year, mostly on major concepts such as math.

No students were identified as having a modified program because of being "gifted." However, a specific question about gifted students was not asked. Some participants felt that they encountered an unusually large number of learning-disabled students who were not able to progress at the curriculum "norm."

Majority of Students Are Behind: Many teachers reported that class circumstances resulted in their rarely being able to teach the entire curriculum in a regular school year. The estimated percentage of the number of students on or ahead of grade level in a class was 5%-25%, the percentage two grade levels behind was approximately 25%-50%, and the remainder of the class was said to be more than two grades behind. Many of these students were illiterate. This remained true even at the higher grades (as much as 50% of the class). It was mentioned that the higher the grade level, the greater the number of students behind grade level in that class. One teacher shared, "Only 10% might meet the minimum acceptable standard." However, there were a number of teachers in one school who identified classes of 40%-60% of their students at grade level. They felt that this was substantially higher than in previous years and did not know whether it was an anomaly or an improving trend throughout the school. When probed, most expected that it was an anomaly. One participant stated, "I have fourteen students in my class. I probably have eight that are at grade level; . . . this is an exceptional class. This has been the best class in five years." Another person commented that "usually found that most of my students, on average, are at about the Grade 5 level, so they struggle with that achievement exam; it's difficult (Grade 6 Test)." Some communities reported that language arts performance was at a lower level than mathematics. Others found the opposite to be true. This seemed to be consistent with geography: Those living closer to urban centres were proportionately better in language arts. The following summary was provided by one of the teachers:

> I'd say, if you take a class average, usually the class is performing about two grade levels below. So usually Grade 6 are around Grade 4, and you'll have some that are definitely quite a bit lower than that, and then you'll have some—usually you have about two or three in a class of twenty that are at grade level.

Further comments that illustrate the grade achievement level and age of the students are listed below:

> [What's your usual experience?] Half. And actually, the class that I have right now, just about eighty percent of them have failed at least one grade, so they're older, . . . if they were compared to where they should be for their age level, not at grade level.
>
> Eighty percent are not at grade level.
>
> Twenty percent probably [are actually studying at the age/grade curriculum].
>
> About 70% of the students are behind.
>
> Programming the same content but modified in Science and Social Studies; . . . math and language arts are individualized

Provincial School Testing Prejudice: The Native schools surveyed were very careful to maintain the correct grade/age matches when creating classes and during testing. However, teachers suspected that mainstream provincial schools might be assessing Native students in their districts one or more age years later than required. This is due to a strong belief that non-Native schools retain and demote transferring Native students behind their appropriate age/grade levels far more frequently than Native schools do. Thus a Native student in Grade 3 in a provincial school might have four years of graded schooling before being assessed. The same student in a non-Native school would be tested after three years. Therefore, it is possible that schools are testing Native students registered in their schools at an age one year older than those in Native community schools. In addition, it is believed that students may be exempted more often in the provincial schools. Thus, these actions provide inflated urban-school provincial achievement results. One educator very strongly claimed that provincial results have an upward skew because of the higher number of exemptions, the testing of students after

they have been retained a year, and regular demotion of reserve students upon their registration in a reserve school. The rumoured "reflex" to demote and retain was labelled *institutional racism* by one teacher. This practice would also create a difficult and unequal situation for Native schools when results are compared by parents.

Question 3

Do you discuss the provincial student achievement test results of your Native students with other teachers, parents, students, or others? If yes, please describe the process.

Question 4

Are there any other ways that you deal with the results?

Data Analysis Result(s):	8. Limited Teacher Interaction With
5. Test Results Are Incomplete	Community
6. Not Used for Programming	9. Leaders' Expectations Unrealistic
7. Staff and Strategy Inconsistency	

Test Results Are Incomplete: There was a wide range of responses to the question about discussing the provincial achievement test with others. Some teachers commented that they were not able to discuss the test results with other staff because they had not seen the results. One participant shared, "The first year I was here the individual-question summaries came back to the teachers. This year it certainly didn't come to me." However, all board or school administrators seemed to have received them from Alberta Learning. Other teachers reported receiving the results, but inconsistently. Some years they received a portion, other years none at all. Explanations for this inconsistency were not forthcoming. One participant commented that "if you get it, it's useful." The majority of teachers who did receive the results saw only a profile and not the specific and individualized student reports that itemized how each student performed on a per-question basis. For example, one teacher stated, "No, no. Like, say, with the science achievement, I couldn't say that they did worse on the forestry unit than the solar system unit or anything like that, so, no." All felt that a thorough sharing of this information with

the community and among all teachers would be beneficial. A very good picture of the potential use of the results and the inconsistency experienced was summarized by an interviewee:

> Oh, you want to see how the kids are doing, and then when the province sends them back, what areas kids tend to be weak in. I believe last year our kids were really weak in drawing inferences and conclusions and stuff like that, so I tend to work more on that area then for the following year. . . . You get a breakdown. You can get a breakdown of which questions were answered correctly, as percentage-wise in the class, and which ones they did terribly on. . . . Some years it's kind of been missed—but the last couple of years we've been getting really good information back, usually for the beginning of the next year, so that's good, so at least you can do something about it then. The school actually gets the school report on areas covered by the students, so that works pretty good that way.

Another participant confirmed the potential programming value of the results:

> We get a class sheet, and it has their names, and it tells the percentages, the marks and the percentages; they're comparative. And then you get the individual result, and on the individual result it breaks it up; say, skills. And in the math I think there's three different areas, and then they have a little scale, so they give you average, below, and excellent.

Not Used for Programming: Teachers who did have the results and used them in a team-planning process often did so at their own discretion. This was often dependent on random teacher relationships rather than a planned process. In some cases only school administrators reviewed results, and in other cases these were loosely part of school planning. One school administrator noted that there had not been any discussion with students on the results of provincial achievement tests and no schoolwide programming. The principal had presented to the Band Council, and the school Parent Advisory Committee had seen the results. In addition, the results had been "sent out to parents," but no feedback had been received. A schoolwide analytical review with a progressive developmental and documented plan seemed to be lacking in all schools. As shared by one participant:

> The school should be breaking down the results and dialoguing in small groups of teachers including next years, this year and the previous year teachers. It must be seen it as a schoolwide problem. Teachers not involved in the testing should use some assessment as well. This is not happening much.

Some teachers reported that they had not requested the results or looked for the results in a student cumulative record file. An administrator shared, "The teachers never go through the cume files, no. Rarely, rarely, unless they're looking for something that pertains to their classroom needs." These files are the foundation for consistent and effective student programming, and were confirmed by many participants as the location of the achievement test results. To what extent administration encouraged or facilitated joint planning was not asked. However, school administrative inconsistency with the returning of results was brought up by a number of participants from each community.

Staff and Strategy Inconsistency: It was reported that a very high teacher and principal turnover rate affected the school's, students' and parents' ability to plan and program. One school was reported to have had a turnover of three principals in the same school year. Another participant reported, "A lot of the problem has been that we've had so much rotation of administration over the years. I've been here for five years; I think we've gone through twelve or thirteen principals in that time." Participants experienced this problem through a lack of consistency in school strategies. One person commented that there was a lack of "consistent schoolwide assessment and programming." It was also stated that "Native schools have a lack of a clearly laid out curriculum, assessment tools, and programs." It should be noted that there was a minority of educators who had been in the communities for many years. These individuals spoke with a strong compassion and commitment toward the community and children.

Limited Teacher Interaction With Community: It was commented that the community is not involved in a review of the results. One administrator observed that the tests are "not really for parents; . . . that's one of the really big difficulties in our school, the parental involvement isn't really there." It was also stated that the "test results are mostly administration information since they might result in undue stress or panic among others because they are extremely low." However, most schools felt that they had made efforts to make the results available to parents and band counsellors.

All schools favoured school interactions with parents. However, most commented that parents rarely came to the school to discuss the results, "to share with students and parents if they are interested, but they don't come to meetings." No school offered a plan to get around this problem. When I asked whether the results are meaningful to parents,

one participant commented, "I really couldn't tell you, because I had no response from any parents. I believe I set a night for discussion of that, and nothing came of it." There was a realization by some participants that those results sent home may not have been understood. The teachers also felt that their students' homes were difficult to access, and they were not sure if they would be welcome. The view of a number of people is represented by this quotation: "What I tried to do at the start of the year was have good parent contact, and I've contacted every parent. That's another problem too, parental contact. Many don't have a phone, and there's no way to reach them."

Some participants felt that the parents were not interested in being involved with the school. One person interviewed shared, "A lot of parents here are dealing with residential schools and stuff like that. . . . I would say that school probably isn't a main priority for a lot of them." It was also believed that "at the lower level there seems to be a lot of interest [from parents], and then it kind of dwindles down to junior high." One interviewee also observed:

> I think that Native parents tend to leave the schooling to the professionals. I don't know whether they feel that they don't have the right to be here or whether it's not a real open environment for them to come in. We try to make it as friendly and open as possible, but there may be some that just are afraid to come.

Native teachers and staff from the communities and a few non-Native teachers commented that they believed that non-Native teachers were welcome in Native homes. Other participants felt that they were welcome, but time was required to break or cross barriers. As one participant stated, "It is kind of hard to get to know the community, . . . because I've been here six years, and I think effort on my part [is needed], and the effort on the community, it goes both ways." Another person shared:

> I think as the years go by and they know that you're at the school and you've been there for a while, that you really care about the students, and therefore they will take your concerns better. . . . They trust you; they trust that you're going to be there, and they know that you're not prejudiced or that you're there and you're going to be there for a while. A lot of times I see these principals, they're not from this community. They live in the city. . . . I think a lot of times I've seen some people that come in here and do really well, like John. We play hockey against the community twice a week in the wintertime, and it worked really well, because people got to know him. "Hey, there's John. How are you doing, John? How do you know John?" "Oh, I met him playing hockey." . . . There's a handful

> of teachers that actually take time to be with the students, that say, "Yes, let me know a little more about you." And the parents watch that. If you came here and you started saying, "Hey, Fred, call me up when there's a round dance. I want to bring my family up." "Sure. Stay overnight at my house after the round dance." "All right." A lot of these people have never been in an Indian home in their lives. (Native speaker)

At least one person saw the lack of community and school communication as the school avoiding issues and not supporting the students:

> How can you change something if you don't want to really look at it? The system itself is failing the student, and the parents are failing the student; who's supposed to look after that child's rights? Who's supposed to say, "You people are not doing what you're supposed to do at home, and we're not doing what we're supposed to do"? Who's supposed to do that? Who's supposed to correct that themselves? Who's the one that's the watchdog for the child? Who looks after the child? [Next question: What's lacking?] I think a lot of it is lack of honesty.

A first-year teacher shared the following as his intentions for parental involvement with provincial achievement test results:

> Once I have received the results, I'm going to actually deliver these results to their parents, try to contact them in any way I can, because I think they need to know where they're sitting at, their kids, because most of the kids are at grade level. . . . We will just talk about weaknesses and relate to how to take these results and what to do with them. I'd like to tell the parents where they're at; they need to know straight out, and we need to be honest with them and give them strategies for what they can do to improve on their results for the future.

Leaders' Expectations Unrealistic: According to the school principals, the test results were communicated to the Band Councils. These presentations to band councillors were often a source of conflict because the poor performance led the councillors to worry about the quality of teaching. Despite a concern over results, it does not appear that band councillors and school administrators meaningfully analyzed the results and planned for improvement. According to teachers and principals, the band and parents were upset over low achievement levels, but the absence of dialogue prevented the generation of solutions. This context resulted in teacher frustration, with some teachers feeling that the band leaders' expectations for better results were unrealistic. One participant said:

> I think Chief and Council have been led, or for some reason believe, that there should be a one hundred percent pass rate with achievement exams, and now there's a little bit of pressure on teachers that if that doesn't happen this year, that there could be some teachers let go. I don't think that they realize that the achievement exams are to help you to improve, not to pinpoint teachers or that sort of thing.

Another participant also commented that the community was "unwilling to accept responsibility for failures. It is always an outside force." On the other hand, another interviewee shared that "the school is enabling the community's problems by not having a high standard." An approach that combined both of these issues was offered by one participant:

> When they're presenting these marks and stuff, I think they should be presenting them with their attendance percentage in school. . . . We can say that "Mary failed the achievement test and is functioning at a Grade 1 reading level," if that's written on the paper, and then you can say, "Okay, that is why." When you're just getting eight kids failing, and nothing on that paper saying why they're failing, then it makes it look like the teacher's not doing their job. But if you can say, "Okay, Sean failed, but he has only been here for thirty percent of the school year," "Oh, that's why they failed."

Question 5

In your experience do the majority of Native students in your system meet the acceptable provincial standards? If not, do any meet these criteria? Are students from your class (or school, for principals) exempted from writing the tests? Do students miss the test for any reasons? If yes, what are the reasons?

Data Analysis Result(s):	14. Few Exemptions
10. Most Students Below Acceptable Standard	15. Potential Harm of Test
	16. Exemption Policy Confusion
11. Low Skills Affect Motivation	17. Inadequate Special Needs Funding
12. Little Special Assistance Occurs	18. Negative Influence of Other Students
13. Timing of the Test Is Poor	19. Native Students Can Succeed

Most Students Below Acceptable Standard: As expected, the answers for the subjective questions that asked for a percentage of students learning at the correct age/grade curriculum level and for a percentage obtaining the achievement test acceptable or excellence criteria for their grade level were similar. Despite this expected similarity, one administrator mentioned that the teachers in his/her school were very disturbed by the overall negative results. Some comments include the following: "Hardly any passed," "Results are very, very weak," "Five at acceptable standard," and "The results expected are that about 10% will meet acceptable standard." Additional comments about achievement test performance were, "In past years I would be lucky if three or four did, but I project that this year half will, at least, because they're a better class than I had previously"; and "Only 10% might meet the minimum acceptable standard." The most successful expected performance reported by any teacher was, "No, most don't, but about one third will meet acceptable provincial standard." The results reported by the teachers were very low overall and consistent with the 1994-1997 results referred to in Chapter 1 of this thesis. One participant qualified his/her statement:

> I think that with the results of these exams you have to know that this classroom has four students in modified programs, so that you know that those students would not have passed anyway. . . . If you're two or three grade levels below, how are you going to pass a Grade 6 achievement exam?

Interestingly, some students actually learning at their grade level also performed poorly on the provincial achievement test. "Even students at grade level fail the test" was a comment by one of the participants. Possible explanations given by participants included test anxiety, overestimation of grade level by teachers, poor test-taking skills, and student tiredness and lack of preparation because of the effect of community events and lifestyle in June. Another explanation was that the format of the test was not congruent with his/her student success. One participant commented:

> When we do math problems in the class, they read a problem and they figure it out; they get the answer, and I get them to write it in a sentence. Now you're getting them to figure out the answer, to select the answer, to colour it and all that. Just the idea for some of these kids to be in that situation is intimidating, because you're giving them all these answers. . . . what you're doing is putting them in a situation where some of them will be encouraged just to guess. I think a lot of my kids guess. I photocopied an old reading achievement test, that you're supposed to

> be given an hour, to write and I had a boy come up in fifteen minutes, I'm done." So you tell me what he's been doing: just colouring it in.

Low Skills Affect Motivation: Many teachers also noted that the test seemed overwhelming to the students: "They know that they're not going to pass it. They take one look at all the writing and the amount of reading that they're going to have to do, and it just seems overwhelming for them"; "The multiple choice, I can see some of them just go tick, tick, tick, tick. . . . [at random]. . . . Yes." This was supported by another participant: "The students are very intimidated by them, and a lot of them don't even try to do their best on them, so I don't think that it really accurately reflects their learning for a lot of them." Another interviewee commented, "They might try on the first short story, part of the second, and the third, it kind of gets too much for them; they just slump, and then finally they start guessing."

Little Special Assistance Occurs: This was reported as being a frustration for students as well as their educators. An additional frustration for many teachers was that, despite consistently poor results, little successful assistance or programming has occurred. "Poor results should create an effort to deal with those not making the grade" was a comment made by one person interviewed.

Timing of the Test Is Poor: One other explanation for poor results was the timing of the test. The attendance and motivation during the months of May and June were seen as low in every community. The administrators of each school made every effort to ensure that students were in attendance for testing. However, teachers observed that the preparation, energy, and interest of these students were very low. Thus teachers felt that testing at the Alberta Learning scheduled time was not conducive to measuring student ability accurately. It was pointed out that "the population is transient toward the end of the year, and this affects results, especially in the older grades, . . . where as many as 50% may leave." The returning of the test results was also not ideal for planning and student programming, according to some participants. One person commented that the May test results "are returned in September; this handicaps the processing of the tests at the school level."

Few Exemptions: Some teachers felt that students who started the Grades 3, 6, or 9 school year significantly behind grade levels (the current achievement test year) had no

chance to progress enough in one year to obtain an acceptable standard on the provincial achievement test. During testing, these students are extremely frustrated by not being able to read the test. They react by misbehaving, racing through the forms, checking any answer, and claiming to be finished much earlier than other students, which invalidates their assessment and any hope of using the test for diagnostic and programming purposes. Despite this, they are usually forced by administration and government policy to write the test. In fact, this survey found very few Native students being exempted; only those students designated as having learning disabilities and funded and programmed for this were possibly exempted, which amounted to only a few per school. One comment was that "none are exempted, and we have readers and scribes to meet their needs"; and "In the entire school, only the severe ones are exempted." It was felt that if more exemptions were provided, and one-on-one testing was allowed when appropriate, the overall test performance of schools and these individuals would be better. Another commented that "My kids weren't severe enough to be exempt. I had IEPs and stuff, because in this school you had to have IEPs, and you had to have documentation, . . . and they wouldn't even look at them [school administration]."

Potential Harm of Test: Some teachers believed that the frustrating experience of being overwhelmed by the testing resulted in the destruction of self-esteem and reinforced feelings of failure. Some felt that "students who have difficulty with these tests can see themselves as failures or useless." Administration did not see this harmful scenario as "harmful enough" for test exemption. It was suggested that students be allowed to write the grade-level test for which they were academically ready regardless of age. Therefore, a Grade 9-aged student could write the Grade 3 or Grade 6 test if that was his or her highest level of achievement. One related suggestion was to test all students on the more general diagnostic test, and then provide the Alberta Achievement Test only to those students who achieved within one year of their grade/norm on the diagnostic test.

Exemption Policy Confusion: The question of exempting or not exempting revolves around the testing definition of whether the test will harm the student. The teachers felt that the administrators' and Alberta Learning's view of this was very narrow and did not include possible negative effects on self-esteem or the impact that comes from adding more frustrating and failure-reinforcing experiences. As stated earlier, they felt that the

test "should exclude those who are obviously far behind as it can be damaging to their self-esteem and therefore detrimental to improvement." In addition to the suggestions mentioned earlier, many suggested that students identified by teachers as more than two grade levels behind should not write the Provincial Achievement Test. Those asked were willing to "sign off" such students as "being under provincial standards" and conduct teacher-designed tests, commercial tests, grade-appropriate tests, or Alberta Learning diagnostic tests for these students. In most cases the idea of testing was supported, but the teachers wanted an experience that was at, or close to, the students' work level and therefore worthwhile because it would provide useful programming information. They felt that in some cases this could be best accomplished by replacing the Provincial Achievement Test with a commercial Diagnostic Standardized Test that would provide information on a broader range of grades and skills. They would also be able to select from multiple forms and therefore test at the same level more often if progress was slow. It was interesting that at least one participant commented that he or she observed that those students "who qualify for, and receive, scribes do better than those who do not." However, few scribes were assigned. This was a sore point for many, as they saw scribes as needed, and an appropriate way to raise the results. One part of the problem was seen as a "difference in exemptions; . . . . urban schools exempt more students due to a difference in the 'high cost funded' (special-needs students) criteria interpretations or definitions."

There seem to be students who are not being properly accommodated even by Alberta Learning policy. It may be that the exemption rules are well designed by Alberta Learning and accommodate these circumstances. However, the teachers felt that the community-level execution of this is not consistent with their view of sensitive student-centred practices. At least one school used the issue as a way of further developing its special-needs Individualized Education Plan (IEPs). In this case no child could be exempted unless he or she was on an IEP. Other schools felt that a majority of their students were IEP appropriate by mainstream Canadian school standards. However, they required special-needs funding for these children before they could be exempted.

Inadequate Special-Needs Funding: Getting special-needs funding was seen as a "Catch-22" situation. IAND will fund additional dollars only if the school's request

involves diagnostic testing from specialists. The schools must hire these specialists. The schools do not have the financial resources to test more than a few students. The need is much larger than this, and if testing provides a result that does not access funding, or IAND refuses for any other reason (e.g., budget constraints), the school is left with the bill to pay. One participant noted, "Special Education funding does not offset the high cost of assessment."

Negative Influence of Other Students: A lack of support was frustrating because the large number of disadvantaged students creates a "norm" that is skewed toward a special-needs average, which places the school and staff in a very difficult teaching circumstance. According to one participant, this also creates a situation in which the students are predominantly modeling negative behaviour to each other. Some students learn new misbehaviours, whereas other students' misconduct is reinforced. Some comments from participants that highlight this are as follows:

> Unsuccessful? The kids who don't come to school; the kids who, when they do come, fool around. . . . They're disruptive, they bug other kids, break pencils, tear up paper, are disruptive, have an "I'm not willing to learn at all" and an "I don't care" attitude about everything: "If I get in trouble, I don't care. If you're going to do this, I don't care." Nothing seems to appeal to them. Also there's a lot of ones that are very quiet, keep to themselves, but the noisier ones are the ones that you attend to; they are the ones that have their hands up and keep coming up to your desk that you're going to help, and it's the ones that aren't at level or the ones that are having problems.

> There is significant ESL problems. What happens if you have five special-needs kids, three middle-of-the-road kids, and two high kids, kids that can do really well, what do you think will happen to those two kids? Who gets all the attention, and who doesn't get the attention? We're at a high population of FAS, we have a lot of these things, and the thing about it is, the child's personal background, whatever he comes from, is not being recognized. We should have about three special-needs classes here. I think that's really a definite. Those children are not going to academically excel to Grade 9 level in a normal school.

Native Students Can Succeed: In the midst of the overwhelmingly negative results and circumstances were some heart-warming statements of faith and pride in the abilities and successes of many of the students. One Native participant proudly stated, "My daughter's

doing her master's in history now; she's writing her thesis." He also spoke about his wife's, other daughter's, and personal school successes.

Question 6

In your experience what have been the characteristics of your Native students who have been successful in the Provincial Student Achievement Tests?

Data Analysis Result(s):	22. Student Self-Esteem
20. Characteristics of Successful Students	23. Succeeding Against the Odds
21. Traditional Values Support Learning	24. School as a Refuge

Characteristics of Successful Students: The answers to a question about the characteristics required for success were very involved. However, the reality of time constraints forced the participants to identify their priorities in this regard. Despite probing efforts by the researcher, none went beyond identifying only a few characteristics. This might mean that these answers represent essential or critical points or that a more detailed and specific study is required, and therefore the value of these responses is limited. Or, as stated by one interviewee, he or she "does not see this enough to generalize, . . . but intelligence does not necessarily correspond to success."

According to those surveyed, successful performance on achievement tests was, first of all, dependent on the level of skills at which the child entered the testing year. Those who were very low could not increase enough to the provincial standard without years of upgrading. The general characteristics of success that were identified were good reading, developing inference and other higher-level cognitive skills, word attack, completion of homework, parental support, and the family seeing education as a priority. Other characteristics identified included being attentive; having good attendance; being exposed to reading material at home; having good general "world knowledge" and a variety of experiences, including traveling; persevering; having excellent test-taking and work skills; having parental involvement, a higher I.Q., good social skills with peers and teachers; a focus on their future career and lives; being motivated; having good comprehension and word-attack skills; and having organizational skills and a positive

mental attitude. One participant commented: "Jill just walked by. She's fifteen years old, and she's got brains, she's smart, but she just doesn't want to apply it. She could probably do well in a test, but she just doesn't want to apply herself." Another interviewee pointed out that, successful students in his/her experience are

> usually good attenders at school; they've got some excellent study-habit skills and work skills; usually a higher IQ; more parental involvement in their education; and good social skills with their peers and with the teachers; and they seem to have, by the time they reach Grade 9, an idea of where they want to focus their life and what career choice they want to make. So all of that aids them.

One participant stated:

> Our community is the same as any other community: You'll find a lot of the low-end kids, the lower-skilled kids are kids that come from a difficult family. And then your higher end comes from people who already have strong jobs or have a very strong background.

Most participants felt that a good home environment and parents seeing the school as important were critical to student success. One of those interviewed emphasized the importance of "a good home environment, where education is valued; books are at home; parental involvement in the school and contact with the teacher." Another participant commented:

> I find that a lot of it is one or the other parent, I guess, is academically inclined. It's because their parents, do better themselves, have been through education, and they really push it. They have the computer. They can do their work at home, and they try to get that. I think the home situation as well would play a factor. I guess a lot of it would have to do with their past educational experiences, like what teachers they've had in the past, and also a lot of the support systems at home.

Other comments made by those interviewed include the following:

> I'd say it's the kids that are being supported at home. They have the guidance, and they have someone there to make sure they get their homework done; they have someone there to make sure they get to bed on time; they have someone there to take an interest in them, read to them.

> They tend to be fairly motivated. They come into Grade 6 with a fairly good reading comprehension and reading skills. Reading skills and stuff are pretty close to grade level, Grade 5, Grade 6. And they come to school; their attendance tends to be a lot better than the majority. I think they tend to have parents, that you're

> seeing at parent-teacher interviews, and they're the ones that want to know if their kid's missing.

> They have test readiness in an academic school sense; . . . the student is comfortable with writing test; . . . same kids who have level heads in all areas do well on tests. Students are prepared for school, . . . have a "do your best" attitude.

> The student has confidence in his/her abilities, there is a feeling of success in school, and they are willing to put out a good effort

Traditional Values Support Learning: Some participants felt that students raised in a very traditional lifestyle and belief system were well mannered and good attenders in school. The combination resulted in good students who achieved average or better grades in school. "Some students from a strong and healthy traditional home life also do well" was stated during interviews. It was felt that there may be common values that transfer between these experiences, such as a work ethic or morals. Another teacher felt that this was true, but added that they might still not be as educationally motivated as those from positive homes with parents who have successfully achieved in the school system. One participant commented that "a combination of both the traditional and modern household is what is seen as most successful balance." A Native teacher suggested that she observed that Native people need both (a) an understanding of and competency in the mainstream Canadian society, and (b) skills in and respect for their own cultural heritage. When one or the other is missing in today's world, they are likely to experience personal frustrations and dissonance that will push them to dysfunctional choices. This respondent felt very strongly about having personally observed and experienced this over the years. It should be noted that the majority of those interviewed were non-Native and that most of these respondents shared the information that they were unfamiliar with the community households.

Student Self-Esteem: Attitude was consistently mentioned as a critical factor in school success. This was strongly linked with self-esteem.

> It's the kids who are always eager to learn. In their spare time they always want to read more. The family says, "You're smart, you're smart, you're just like your brother, you're smart," so it's just like they're pumping them, kind of pushing them up, so that they're thinking they're smart so that they want to learn more;

> like, "Yes, I'm smart. I can handle it." So I guess they have the family pumping them up, plus I guess their self-image.

The related concepts of "confidence in one's own ability and a feeling of success in school resulted in the students putting out a good effort." As one participant commented, successful students had "self-esteem, . . . a high level of confidence in who they are and being a Native person." This is also discussed under question 5, potential harm of the test.

Succeeding Against the Odds: Participants also commented that "students from dysfunctional homes or from families not valuing education generally were lower in achievement." However, it was noted that there are many students doing well despite the burden of having to overcome the consequences of extremely dysfunctional households. As stated by a participant, "Some students succeed even without what the school considers to be the necessary requirements." Those commenting on this did so with admiration for their students. They speculated that these students would likely be seen as highly gifted individuals in any other educational circumstance. On person shared:

> There's a very high number of those kind of kids here, that if you were looking, they would be actually like high achievers because of the fact that they've taken on their adversities, they have dealt with the issue and got here, no matter what. . . . But if you or I were to go there from that kind of life, I don't know if we would survive.

School as a Refuge: For some students school can be a daily opportunity to escape from undesirable home-life circumstances.

> There's probably at least four students in my classroom right now that I know have either been sexually abused, physically abused, and have been tossed around from home to home with Social Services. And yes, they have their bad days, and they can't concentrate, and they're acting out and frustrated. Some students have been able to get beyond that, and school is their refuge and their safety net, and they thrive here; but others need this as a place to act out their frustrations.

Question 7

What are the characteristics of your Native students who are unsuccessful in the Provincial Student Achievement Tests?

Data Analysis Result(s):	30. Difficult Class Student Composition
25. Characteristics of Unsuccessful Students	31. Learning Styles and Relevance
26. Family Dysfunctions	32. Language Issues
27. Barriers to Learning Readiness	33. Student Abilities Underestimated
28. Student Awareness of the World	34. Convenient Excuses Exist
29. Perception Government or Band Will Provide	

The question of characteristics of unsuccessful school students was essentially seen by participants as answerable by looking for the opposite of what successful students possessed. Few participants felt comfortable answering in this way, or perhaps they were uncomfortable being critical of their students or pressed for time. Therefore, the researcher rephrased the question to ask them to focus only on a few unsuccessful student situations that they had experienced and to share any further insights that might differ from the opposite of the answer to question six. Essentially, this similar question was presented to confirm the answers to other questions and to stimulate more dialogue on the characteristics issue.

Characteristics of Unsuccessful Students: Some comments about Native students who are unsuccessful in school include that school might not be a main priority in a student's life; sometimes meeting basic survival and personal needs necessarily takes precedence over school; cumulatively, a student may be simply too far behind to succeed; they might have low self-esteem, be disruptive or destructive, or have a "Don't care about anything attitude"; some are quiet, shy, and withdrawn and can therefore easily be missed by the classroom teacher; and they may come from an impoverished home environment. In circumstances dominated by the previous characteristics, the teachers noted that intelligence does not necessarily imply success. Other characteristics of unsuccessful students include acceptance of mediocrity; persistent apathy, and a "welfare mentality"; lack of interest by the family in education; nonparticipation of the family in the child's education; parents preoccupied with other things; a high truancy rate; negative behaviour in class (also affects all students); learning problems; transient nature (moving between communities); lack of support at home; low self-esteem; test anxiety; abusive/neglectful,

dysfunctional homes; and fear of succeeding because of expectations that will be placed on them. A participant also felt that "parents have a lack of follow-through even when they do understand the school's or student's problems and needs." Insufficient sleep was identified as a significant problem, and numerous cases of students falling asleep during classes were noted. This may also be the cause of what teachers saw as "laziness" and a lack of perseverance to check work and complete tasks. It was also noted that "not meeting acceptable standards was due to poor test-taking skills and absences, and they won't attend for the test." A teacher commented on how he reviewed test taking:

> I've incorporated a year-long reading comprehension program into my tests, so by September we've done reading comprehension in how to read these [tests] for understanding, how to take a test which is multiple choice, crossing off the goofy answers, as we call them, and relegating the most likable answer, . . . test-taking skills.

One respondent summarized the characteristics of the unsuccessful students as follows:

> Those who do poorly are not motivated don't care, and have domestic problems within families, organizational skills are poor, home support is poor, kids can freeze under the pressure of test, low self-esteem, I am dumb belief, and they don't get the work done, poor attendance or removal from school, lack of respect for self, others, property and the school process. They have the cognitive ability but this is not turning into skills.

Family Dysfunctions: The teachers believed that school skills are often not relevant or practical in some students' homes and lives, leaving students the opportunity to learn them only in school. For example, many community families make very frequent trips to large urban centres, but drop their children off at the mall rather than participate with them in more educational environments or in family recreation activities. Cultural differences might determine whether children are included in family decisions or asked for their opinion. These kinds of thinking and judgment processes are important in school/curriculum yet may be absent in some families.

Beyond these differences in family-raising practices are seriously destructive forces and circumstances. Participants reported that "students from dysfunctional homes or from families not valuing education generally had students lower in achievement." It was also shared that "there's some students with horrendous home lives here, and that

definitely affects their behaviour and their ability to concentrate." Another person commented, "Some of them are even afraid to succeed. Those who do poorly are not motivated, don't care, and have domestic problems within families. I would say a dysfunctional home breeds that." Other respondents felt that students were "unsuccessful due to family problems." A participant also commented that "bingo and shopping has a large effect," which he/she referred to as "social abandonment." A frightfully descriptive term was shared by one participant: They become "broken kids" and "are free moving, with no social consciousness." Another participant (a local Native person) shared:

> I've been in the home of a couple of boys here. They have no furniture. . . . They have no table, they have no chairs, they have no couch; they have beds and that's it. . . . A lot of times it's really difficult for these children. School is a safe place for them. A lot of them come from places that are very scary. If you look at the children, where they came from, there's some children here that are very strong, just to be here, and coming from the adversities that they just came from at home, being here and trying to get a C-plus. Maybe C-plus is not the greatest, but if you look at where they came from and what they do—I've seen kids here wearing the same clothes for three days. They wash their face, they comb their hair, and they wear the same clothes. They still try to maintain their composure, but they can only do C-plus, but they're trying. And to me, that's very successful. . . . How do you measure that level of success? If Mary comes here and she's being molested at home by her uncle or something, or her dad is drunk and she still comes to school, the best she can do, especially with lack of sleep or whatever, is C-plus. If we looked at where she came from, she's doing extremely well. We don't recognize those kids, and there's a very high number of those kind of kids here. They would be actually like high achievers because of the fact that they've taken on their adversities, they have dealt with the issue and got here, no matter what. I've seen kids walk here, and they come here with no food. They haven't eaten, and they still come here to do this. But the system doesn't recognize those ones, which is too bad because they really need a pat. I know who they are. I give them a hug; I say, "Hey, you're doing all right today." . . . I think the kids owe me over a hundred dollars' worth of French fries here and pops, because I just say, "Here, you need it." I know they're hungry; I know they need it. "Come on, I'll buy you a pop." I'm their hug that they don't get sometimes.

Barriers to Learning Readiness: As discussed above, some students must overcome incredible home-life barriers to even arrive at school. These situations range from personal abuses to the student being the primary caregiver for younger siblings and/or dysfunctional adults. Student personal problems also exist. Some of those interviewed

mentioned the use of drugs and alcohol by school-age students. One locally raised Native interviewee commented:

> The negative things are so easily attainable: sex, drugs, alcohol. Those things are just right there; you just have to walk out the door. . . . Nowadays there's coke, there's speedball, there's all kinds of drugs, there's TV, there's rap; there's so much out there. There's liquor stores on every corner now. It's easy to go get some guy to go buy you a case of beer, and drugs are becoming very relevant in our community. It's scary.

Another barrier may simply be due to expecting a positive traditional Native household to accommodate school schedules. As one participant shared, "Unsuccessful students do not have family support that is conducive to success in education. Even excellent parents don't parent in a way that supports the student in school." In these cases any kind of attendance is the goal, and achievement is in terms of only sporadic learning. Attendance has a cumulative impact. One participant commented:

> You get some kids that, by the time they get into Grade 6, they've missed so much school. If you have a kid working at the Grade 3 level and is now coming all the time in Grade 6, you're lucky if you can bring him up a year and a half, so he's still at a Grade 4 to Grade 5 reading level.

Attendance is not a simple matter, as an interviewee shared: "They've tried to motivate the kids by giving them an awards nights, but it's year in, year out the same kids who get the same bags." It was also reported that there are also students very well prepared for their educational experience and those somewhere between desperate circumstances and the ideal.

Student Awareness of the World: Beyond some students' personal lives is the educational need to relate to the world that exists outside of the reserve. Many participants felt that "students don't see the wider world." A participant observed, "Students should be able to relate to the world outside of the reserve. . . . This reduces culture-shock. . . . It is important to teach ideas students are not familiar with." On the other hand, many negative elements of the "wider world" were identified as a problem. As one participant stated, "Kids are not that different than those in other schools; they are governed by mass media." Some families were very good at providing meaningful ways for their children to gain an awareness of the larger world. One Native participant stated

that he travels regularly with his children: "We've been to Niagara Falls, we've been to Northern Quebec; I've taken my children all over Canada. We take two months off in the summer, and we travel. They see things. I got to travel with my father." Another participant remarked:

> I think a lot of times a lot of these kids become stagnant because they never get to really see outside; they never get to go out. It becomes a box, and so there's really no push for them to go on. . . . You have to excel in athletics, but there's nothing if you excel in academics that will take you out of here.

However, even within the same school there was disagreement as to whether the students were isolated, somewhat isolated, or not isolated at all.

Perception Government or Band Will Provide: Related to a reserve-centred world is the attitude that the government or band will always provide individuals with what they require. This breeds mediocrity at best, according to one participant. Those interviewed repeatedly spoke about the existence of an apathy among students. One educator said, "They aim low and hit it." They claimed that the reserve system as it operates now provides money and property "for nothing." Many participants felt that receiving the basics and luxuries of life without appropriate work leads to a lack of appreciation for the value of money and an erosion of the social conscience. Many teachers believed that welfare, housing assistance, treaty royalty benefits, and other full or partial financial support systems prevent the development of a work ethic within individuals. Teachers' feelings toward this are evident in the following: "I know a lot of kids think, 'I'm going to have everything paid for when I get older anyway, so what do I need to go to school for'?" Another participant claimed there is a "welfare mentality. . . . You don't have to achieve anything as it will come to you. But academic learning doesn't work that way." Others felt that there was "no understanding of the value of money or its connection to the workplace and school." One comment was that "the reserve system and the money for nothing approach" does not work. A participant stated, "There's a need for economic visibility and accountability."

Difficult Class Student Compositions: The attitudes referred to above left teachers with reluctant and unmotivated learners, according to most participants. Some teachers indicated that at least 20% of the students in a class were significant behavioural

problems. Individually, each of these students interfered with the learning of others. Collectively, they placed the entire class in a difficult or impossible learning situation. The behaviours of these problem students very often set off the mild and moderately troubled students. It also made learning very difficult for those who were easily distracted or who had other learning challenges. It was noted that there were a large number of these students as well. In fact, it was thought that less than a few students in each class would be considered well prepared and motivated learners compared to their urban peers. One school professionally tested a majority of their students and found that at least 35% were identified as special education. Not all students suspected of having a problem were tested, and the school has a very large student enrolment.

The teachers reported that it is very difficult to program for low attendance because they constantly must go over the same material with a number of students. Meanwhile, the rest of the class is ready to progress. Individual programs help, but if too many students are programmed in this way, it can be beyond the ability of teachers to program for and deal with each student's needs during class time. Teachers also report that in classes with low attendance, such as 50%, they are often facing a different set of low attenders each day. These low and irregular attendance patterns and poor preparation for school work result in many students learning at a lower rate. Teachers commented that classes with a mix of low attenders and high attenders, often had low attenders demanding more than their fair share of attention in terms of teaching and behaviour management. As one participant stated, "If the behaviour is obnoxious, then you're coming to that kid all the time because you're trying to make him behave so that the whole class can learn."

Learning Styles and Relevance: Some teachers felt that the school process was failing the students because concepts that are learned are not retained. One participant commented:

> They don't take the concept to the next grade with them. They understand the concepts that day, that month, but then when you leave that concept and come back next year, that concept is not learned and used in their writing or thinking. They need a grassroots foundation, a base. . . . By the time they get to Grade 6 or 5, many are already lost in the system. And if they don't get that foundation learning early, then it's going to snowball.

According to some participants, this lack of retention was because of differences in student learning styles and a lack of curriculum relevance. A Native participant shared, "Our visual is different sometimes; my thinking is different." Another person stated:

> The curriculum is not relevant. . . . They don't retain knowledge on a long term, but do understand in the short term. There are learning style problems, as Native students do not learn sequentially. Teachers should allow them to put the puzzle together and to see it unfold. Teachers should facilitate for the student. Math is the only thing relevant. There is a need for a Native-relevant curriculum. More and more commercial materials available are appropriate but are not recognized by the curriculum. Native students learn faster when the curriculum is relevant.

The very few participants opposed to the Provincial Achievement Test felt that the test provided false results because of differing cultural backgrounds. They felt that it was an underestimation of the student's true cognitive ability. Some felt that the entire curriculum focus neglected Native priorities, lifestyle philosophies, and spirituality. This challenges the fundamental premise of the curriculum being taught and tested or makes a point for integration. Some participants believed that by emphasizing success on the Provincial Achievement Test, schools were overshadowing community culture, traditional skills, and other educational values, placing them in second place at best. One suggestion to deal with this was to have provincial, regional, or community-based traditional/cultural skill evaluations for Native students and a cultural skill development curriculum. In addition, some felt that a Native curriculum for the entire country or at least the Western provinces should be prepared that would be adaptable to the uniqueness of each community and relate to or include the provincial curriculum. This curriculum might also be approved by provincial education officials. This was suggested as an approach to balance issues of learning styles, relevant curriculum, school supportive life experiences, traditional culture, and preparing students to work and live off the reserves if they chose to do so. Material created by the Four Worlds organization at the University of Lethbridge was being used by at least one school.

According to one educator, Native students retain the school's teachings in the short term but not in the long term because the curriculum is not relevant. As some participants explained, this relates to (a) an incomplete understanding and/or lack of internalizing of concepts because of teaching approaches and content not relevant to

Native learning styles and life, (b) the knowledge and skills gained not naturally being reviewed or experienced again in the Native student's daily life as determined by the community culture, and (c) teaching styles that do not match Native learning styles. However, the issue does have more than one side to it. One participant stated, "Tradition is another matter. . . . Families don't give them knowledge of the world." One participant commented that "the curriculum is not in their experience since they are not off the reserve much." The same participant explained that the "average age of Grade 12 graduates is 20 rather than 18, because by this time the world has become more relevant." Some interviewees thought that "in terms of social and world awareness, the students are behind two years." According to some participants, "This can be seen in the grade performance where they are usually two years behind and graduate two years older than the norm." More specifically, other participants agreed that the extra two years of life experience also improved the students' English language ability. This was also enhanced by the larger time in school. It was suggested that programming for these factors in earlier grades or openly accepting a one to two grade-level difference between Native and non-Native results might be beneficial.

Language Issues: Teachers found that problems with the English language were a significant reason for poor school achievement. One participant commented, "The children are in the severe-language-disorders category with delays in language acquisition. They need to have language specialists for school programming and for individual students." Another participant felt that

> it's not that they speak Cree; it's that they've learned the language from people whose first language was Cree, so they get a lot of their past tenses wrong, things like that. You can see the grammatical errors even in their spoken language.

Student Abilities Underestimated: These language difficulties place teachers in difficult assessment and teaching circumstances. One participant stated that the provincial achievement test "is not a true measure of Native students' abilities." This plus other incongruent aspects of the school processes appear to lead teachers to underestimate. Native students' cognitive abilities. A local Native interviewee commented that his family experienced academic labelling. He claimed that

> if you're Cree, you automatically are already labelled, as when my daughters went to the city school, they wanted to put them in special ed. automatically. . . . I said, "I don't think so." A year later my daughter Tracy, she was on the honour roll. She's a very high achiever. The other daughter has to work a little harder, but she's not far behind her as far as grade point average. But the thing about it is that the principal said to me, "You must be pretty proud of them." I said, "Yes, not bad for a person you wanted to put into special ed., eh?"

Students also fail to show their full potential or abilities to teachers. According to one participant, "Kids hear, 'Oh, you're a wimp' or 'You're the whatever' if you do well in school." The students are very much influenced by "how they are viewed by their peers."

Convenient Excuses Exist: One Native educator commented that "Native schools have lots of excuses for why they are not achieving. But instead, they must look for other ways to address their needs." This participant added that all schools are struggling with problems, Native or non-Native, and that many are similar. Another participant stated that the "characteristics of the unsuccessful students are the same as anywhere." An Aboriginal speaker commented, "In one way, being Cree is fine, but sometimes it's an excuse not to do things."

A lack of success for Native students was obvious from the answers of those interviewed. The comments on the characteristics of these students were extensive. What was also apparent was the teachers' frustrations:

> They've been taught those conventions and they know it, but they don't instil it in their writing. We've done checkups and checklists, . . . and they go back and change a few, but going back and correcting is a little bit too much work for them to do. It seems like it's almost laziness. . . . To persevere: to go back and to sit down and take the time to go back, because they do know the rules and conventions of writing.

Question 8

In what format do you see the Provincial Student Achievement Tests results? Do you see an individual question summary? If yes, what do you do with this information?

Question 9

Do you have any suggestions as to how these results could be more useful to you?

Data Analysis Result(s):
35. Suggestions by Participants

The answers to questions 8 and 9 varied between not receiving results and seeing all information. It seemed that the majority of teachers had not seen any of the results, and many had seen only summary reports that indicated the number of students meeting acceptable standards or who were above or below acceptable standards. This was also referred to earlier during the discussions of questions 3 and 4. Most agreed that for students at or close to grade level, the tests provided information useful in program planning.

Suggestions for the Alberta Achievement Test: The participants felt that they should receive a report on all Native schools for comparison and dialoguing purposes. One participant commented, "We wanted to know which schools were having success and what kind of programs they had going, but we couldn't get the results through the provincial department or Indian Affairs." The participants felt that this information should be released with or without references to school names or communities. The point is to demonstrate that other schools are achieving well or failing on the test. Related to the above was the suggestion that the top Native schools, in terms of the Alberta Achievement Test, be identified. This would allow other Native schools the option of contacting them to learn about their successful programs and approaches. There was a significant view that results should not be compared to those of the mainstream Alberta population. Instead, "comparisons to a similar population, a consistent geographical, social, and/or economic area would be useful."

The Alberta Achievement Test provides valuable professional development opportunities as well as immediate information. It was therefore suggested that teachers be encouraged and supported in marking their class test. The results would be available faster, for many teachers this would be a useful professional development exercise, and

the teachers would have the opportunity to learn more about their students' school skills. In addition, teachers should be encouraged and supported in preparing students for the achievement test. This should not dominate their planning and teaching; however, some programming for the test objectives and the required test-teaching skills would benefit students. One participant suggested, "It would be helpful to have a list of vocabulary that they should know, because I find when I'm giving them questions from the example booklets that there's a lot of times I hear, 'What does this word mean?'" It should be noted that the tests are designed to test skills on the Alberta Learning curricula.

One participant commented that students "three grade levels behind . . . [should] just concede the test, and might as well do something better for them, something that they'll get something out of." Another interviewee stated, "Just test kids at grade level and compare them. Let those desperately behind be on continuous progress achievement until they are at achievement test levels." Schools could assign a failure in these cases and simply pass this information on to Alberta Learning without the student's writing the test and going through the frustrations of this failure. In fact, the entire concept of these tests with students in Native communities was questioned. Some thought that there should be a study of "test validity" in respect to Native students and the Alberta Achievement Test. However, others thought that teachers could adapt the test delivery format to meet the needs of their students; for example, by allowing breaks during long testing periods.

Question 10

Do you feel that the Alberta Achievement Tests are appropriate for Native students? What is the basis for your opinion?

Data Analysis Result(s):	38. Suggestions for Provincial Test Appropriateness
36. Support for Provincial Standards	
37. Test vs. Ideal Teaching Practice	

Support for Provincial Standards: Most respondents had a concern with some area of the Provincial Achievement Test or its application. However, all but a very few felt that it was appropriate to have the Native students complete the test, providing that their concerns were addressed. Those in opposition to the test referred to the issue of different learning styles and curriculum relevance (see discussion question 6). Supporting comments were of the type that

> Native school standards should be the same as anywhere else in Alberta, because students will need this curriculum to be successful in today's world. Community relevancy is a priority, but we must also improve students' knowledge of the larger world and give them the ability to dream.

It was also suggested that, as students become more aware of the world, the test will be easier. Another respondent stated there was a need for "consistent programming, following the Alberta curriculum and using the same assessment mechanism and tools as the rest of the province, with the same expectations." Some educators also felt that 20% or so of the students would benefit from the Provincial Achievement Test, but that those far behind their grade level need a great deal of work on nonacademic skills before the test would be appropriate for them.

It was felt that better indicators of student and school performance might be parent surveys, school and program reviews, attendance reports, and the number of school graduates.

Test vs. Ideal Teaching Practice: At least in one community there seemed to be some question as to whether the format of the provincial achievement exams matched the teaching approaches used in the classroom. It was thought that this paper-centred test of skills was not congruent with Alberta Learning's promotion of classroom approaches that were multidisciplined, such as whole-language approaches. One participant commented, "When you're learning math, the problem is given to you. . . . The entire exam is based on reading a problem and finding out the answer, and I find that's not the format of the math curriculum." Another comment was that

> if they write a CTBS test in math, they will score way higher than they will in an achievement test just because of the format of it. I still think that multiple choice is one of the worst things to evaluate a child.

This was especially relevant for English as a Second Language students, who were already behind in reading. A very interesting observation was that test questions can actually be wrong in terms of the students' home reserve reality. For example, a social studies question that asks "What are local governments responsible for?" could be answered differently for band-controlled and municipally organized communities (towns/urban centres). The correct answer on the reserve may be different from the urban setting. The test is likely looking for the answer that applies to mainstream municipalities.

Suggestions Regarding Test Appropriateness: Further suggestions for making the test more appropriate included:

1. Provide teachers who are testing in the current year with the vocabulary that will be on the test. A selection of Native educators could preview the test in September and identify language that might not be familiar to English as a Second Language Native students (e.g., escalator, traffic circle). Curriculum and vocabulary being tested would not be shared, but only the context, descriptive wording, and story-line vocabulary.

2. For some students, the tests should be used for diagnostic or mastery assessment rather than grade- and curriculum-based standards. In this way students would be tested when they are ready for the test, regardless of age. These cases could be IEP related.

3. Alberta Learning should take the responsibility for making the test more relevant. Simple changes such as story lines about powwows and other Native interests were suggested.

4. Those students at or close to grade level should be tested and graded as is done provincially. Students who are far behind should be on continuous-progress programs and tested appropriately.

Question 11

Do you use any other forms of testing with your Native students (e.g., teacher-designed, diagnostic, commercial standardized test)? If "yes," how do the students perform on these tests?

Data Analysis Result(s):
39. Other Testing Used

Other Testing Used: Many commercial or Alberta Learning tests were used in the school system for classroom programming, grade-level assessment, or specific-needs assessment. Tests reported as being used included Woodcott Diagnostic, Alberta Reading Diagnostic, Canadian Achievement Test, Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Brigance, Gates McGinnity, McCaul, Stanford Diagnostic, and Stanford Achievement Test. Brigance seemed to be used mostly in the younger grades. It was reported that the overall results of the commercial standardized and diagnostic test and the provincial achievement test support each other. However, as mentioned earlier, many felt that the flexibility in level testing with standardized test could avoid inappropriate level testing and subsequent student frustrations. For these students standard diagnostic testing was considered to be of more programming benefit as well. One participant commented that "more useful than the achievement tests are teacher tests and standardized tests like Brigance. In addition, the results are immediate. These help to assess where students are at and therefore allow teaching to the students needs." In fact, most schools appeared to be using them often as part of their search for programming solutions. Some schools tested schoolwide, and others restricted the test to students being considered for special funding requests. Speech pathologists and other educational specialists were brought in for assessment and recommendation purposes.

Question 12

Are you aware of any different results or factors relating to the Provincial Student Achievement Test performance of urban and reserve Native students?

Data Analysis Result(s):	42. Those From Urban Schools
40. Parents See Community School Different	Perform Better
41. Violence Patterns Carryover to School	

This question was in many ways an exploratory question in an attempt to provide another chance for the respondents to dialogue on the central issue. It was also intended to broaden their thinking by looking outside of the reserve experience. Many participants felt that their experiences did not relate to the issue. However, some participants had interesting observations that are worthy of reflection and future research. Other participants took the question as a chance to compare the reserve and city/provincial systems. This also produced some interesting answers.

Parents See Community School as Different: The reality for schools in this study was that sometimes the community parents choose urban schools over the reserve school. The Native reserve students who spent significant time in an urban school were generally found to achieve higher than most of their peers when they returned to their community. This reinforced a lack of faith in the reserve school. One respondent commented, "I don't think the parents have much faith in the school system here, and I think some of them want their children to have a better education, and they feel they can get it in a more urban centre." Another participant (local Native) shared:

> I had my kids here for a while, but when we put them into the provincial school, they had a difficult time at first. Which system is going to get them to university. How many kids do you see in the last ten years going to university from this system?

According to one participant, the parents are happy with the school and staff, but not pleased with the peer circumstances that their children will encounter. These parents are well aware of the effects that unmotivated, disruptive, and aggressive peers can have on their children. They believe that their children will be negatively influenced or have their learning interfered with by the poor behaviour of other students or the teachers' preoccupation with so many disruptive and needy students. Therefore some parents send their students to neighbouring urban schools rather than to the home community school. This belief and the dedication to their children are so strong that parents will drive their children to and from urban schools on a daily basis or place them in the care of urban relatives for the school year. The same participant quoted in the previous paragraph (a local Native) explained it as follows:

> I'm bringing up a girl. She's thirteen. She was in the local school. Every other day I've had to go to the local school, or my wife had to go there because she was fighting, because there were groups fighting, and she was the fighter for them. I put her in the city school, and she's totally changed. She's happy; she's actually doing real work. She's away from those kids, and she's away from that system. Now she can say, "I don't need to do it"; whereas over there, you've got to do it.

Another motivation for changing schools is to avoid school responsibilities, attendance, or consequences:

> The students here have a lot of choice to go; they have eleven or twelve different schools they can choose just in this immediate area. So if they go to one school and it's not going well, the parents don't like what's happening as far as, suspensions, or whatever, or they say, "Okay, we'll just move them."

It was interesting that one teacher had taught the same child in both systems, and the child performed better in the urban setting. It was speculated that the same student might experience different social and family environments when in these different settings. Some of the reasons suggested for this difference included:

1. Higher school academic, social, and behavioural expectations are placed on urban school students. Related to this is the greater responsibility placed on parents to ensure that expectations are met and consequences are followed up. Cases were said to exist in which reserve teachers and administrators do not have high enough expectations, and there are also cases in which schools with high expectations are not supported by Band Councils.

2. The teachers also felt that they sometimes had too many students with significant problems to have realistically high expectations in their classroom.

3. Community members force a change in school decisions by complaining bitterly to Band Councils when their children are given consequences for misbehaviour. This might also relate to community politics.

4. As teachers and administrators identify and address a child's problem, parents might transfer the child between urban schools and reserve schools to avoid the consequences and expectations of one or the other school (often the direction is urban to reserve).

5. There is a "community perception that the community school doesn't have the right to place the same expectations on students and parents as a town school."

A further consequence of the problems discussed above is that at least one community in the study is questioning the extent of community control over local education. One participant stated, "Council is very concerned with the results, and they're saying, 'We'll just give it back to the city school system' and suggesting we have to take ten years to evolve for local control."

Violence Patterns Carry Over to School: At least one teacher felt that the reserve communities often model, accept, and reinforce violence in the home and around the community. This violence carries over to school experiences:

> There's some modeling at home. . . . It's almost as if it's condoned when they're not at school. . . . And then it's brought here, and problems that are out there come in here, because there is no escape for these children to go anywhere else.

Another teacher mentioned that

> with students a first reaction seems to be to whip rather than to find another means to solve a problem or walk away or whatever, and it's been more prevalent, on the reserve than any other school I've ever been in, and I've been in quite a few. And that tendency towards violence, this pushing or shoving or whatever.

According to one participant:

> Parents don't want the violence that happens here that I think is far more rampant than we would find in an urban school. The standards, I think, for behaviour are worse, but I think that's due to lack of organization at the school, from the top on down, from Chief and Council and the administration.

Those From Urban Schools Perform Better: "Those students who came from the city school system were much more inclined to work harder, had much better self-esteem, had skills that are much better; the basics were there." It was reported that the students' lifestyle, and therefore preparation for school, might be much weaker in reserve communities than in urban centres (e.g., because of crowded homes, peer influence, reserve late-night-activity patterns). It seems that significant and persistent community distractions occur in reserve schools during school, after school, and late at night. These distractions can be positive activities such as cultural events. However, when they take

place during the school day they affect student attendance, sleep, and therefore learning. Distractions can also be a result of school and community schedules not accommodating each other. As mentioned in other sections of this study, dysfunctional households and community events exist and impact on student learning as well. In addition, parents who move to urban centres often do so for education, training, or employment opportunities, during which time they might be focused, goal orientated, motivated, and organized in a way conducive to school support. One participant commented that

> students from the reserve who go to urban schools and are there for a year, or so, do well and then do poorly when they return to the environment on the reserve. The urban families are either foster care or motivated Native families. This is due to the family members being motivated to succeed in the city. The difference is due to attitudes in work ethics and in expectations towards respect. . . . The same students achieve higher in urban schools due to a better enforcement of attendance and expectations.

Question 13

If you could implement three strategies that would improve Native student achievement what would these be?

All ideas offered by the participants have been listed below.

In many cases the answer to this question was a repetition of answers given before. The question was asked to provide the participants the opportunity to rethink their responses and to prioritize possible strategies, as well as to possibly move the issue from static analysis to action-orientated ideas. Many participants in this research study held the view that the government agencies and educational faculties do not always listen to the front line of education. To assure the participants that their ideas and concerns would be represented and not eliminated by researcher judgement or because others did not hold the same view, early in the meeting I told those interviewed that all ideas would be reported in the study. This was a very important aspect of developing a trusting relationship in these particular interview situations. Therefore, to be true to my word, responses to this question for suggestions have been fully listed. Other sections of this dissertation are bound by researcher judgement, the literature, and the number of the

responses. The comments below (1-45) are not necessarily endorsed by this dissertation; however, they are the views of one or more participants and stated as part of the conclusion of the interviews by participants. The following strategies were suggested from these discussions (they are not prioritized):

1. Increase students' academic and personal confidence.

2. Build students' self-esteem in "who they are" and in their Native identity.

3. Ensure consistency in school programming across all grade levels (e.g., expectations, same assessment tools, programs that build upon each other, and how passing between grades is determined).

4. With the support of Band Councils, maintain the same work ethic and behavioural and attendance expectations found in mainstream Canadian schools.

5. Exclude from testing those who are obviously far behind. If not, their self-esteem will be damaged, and they may not see their own improvements. For these students, use testing time for instruction or more appropriate diagnostic testing.

6. Deal with the community perception that the community school does not have the right to have the same expectations of students and parental responsibility as an urban school.

7. Include more visual learning experiences, such as manipulatives.

8. Improve attendance.

9. Improve parents' and students' understanding of school processes and what this means to them.

10. Concentrate the school effort on writing and reading.

11. Promote parent involvement.

12. Ensure that the school follows up on family/student issues.

13. Do not blame failure on the parents.

14. Concentrate instruction on language arts, and increase exposure to outside communities through integrated field trips.

15. Ensure that course content is taught completely throughout the school year.

16. Focus significantly on a reading program.

17. Place severely disadvantaged students in a separate classroom designed for students with problems; program for them as appropriate, and integrate them in a planned way as much as possible.

18. Provide division or subject advisors from the existing school staff to assist all staff with teaching in ways relevant to the community.

19. Use professional development strategies to offset the fact that most schools are professionally isolated.

20. Use collaborative teacher planning.

21. Require teacher home visits two to three times a year.

22. Provide parenting programs to educate parents about child-rearing options.

23. Hire staff who are caring, innovative, consistent, committed, and good at classroom and student management.

24. Encourage intensive reading and/or reading readiness in early years with preschools, day cares, and kindergarten.

25. Identify all special-needs students, and program for each.

26. Ensure that all personnel are on contracts equal to their provincial counterparts.

27. Ensure that all schools have excellent library resources.

28. Assist parents in developing value for education and seeing how important it is for students' future.

29. Build an overall strategy for the development of higher-level cognitive thinking skills.

30. Improve the current uncomfortable situation with parent and school relations.

31. Ensure that students develop a respect for each other, themselves, property, and school processes.

32. Help to provide economic viability and accountability to communities.

33. Help communities to address the social abandonment of children (e.g., during shopping trips to the city, bingo, and other activities on the reserve).

34. Provide immersion in the Native language (until Grades 3-5), which can be valuable for those who speak the language. The oral skills they learn can then be transferred to the learning of language skills in English. Also expand Native Language

bilingualism (Grade 5 and up when there is immersion, all grades when there is no immersion).

35. Strengthen language arts in all curriculum areas.

36. Make testing more relevant.

37. Allow teachers to mark their own tests and encourage/sponsor more to take the provincial test-marking training, which is excellent professional development and counters the disadvantage of being professionally isolated.

38. Create a Native curriculum for all subjects that is approved by the provincial government.

39. Develop a bigger partnership with the homes. Create a project that has school and homes work together to accomplish something. This would involve planning and implementing together.

40. Ensure that band counsellors and parents see the results.

41. Use athletics as a motivator for school performance.

42. Ensure that the education of those students who are prepared and motivated to learn is not negatively affected by disruptive students.

43. Develop common teacher-planning time; for example, have all the Grade 5 teachers meet, plan, and work together.

44. Develop higher-level student thinking skills such as inference and drawing conclusions.

45. Ensure consistency and continuity in the support of new teachers.

Question 14

Do you have any other comments you would like to share?

Many participants felt that the survey had covered everything that they were interested in sharing. However, a few made additional comments, raised issues, or restated a strong conviction. Some of these have been discussed below. Those with obvious meanings have been listed without elaboration.

Data Analysis Result(s):	47. Staff Compensation and Appreciation
43. Teachers are Dedicated	48. Test and Teacher Evaluation
44. Professional Isolation	49. Simplify Special Funding
45. Need to Value Early Education	50. Problems with Social Promotions
46. Legacy of Government Control	

Teachers Are Dedicated; Professional Isolation: Administers involved in this study felt that it is important to acknowledge the deep and compassionate commitment, as well as the high professional and personal work ethic, of the educators working in Native schools. Administrators felt that their schools had at least competent teachers, and in most cases very dedicated teachers. Yet it should be acknowledged that they are teaching in difficult classroom circumstances. In this context, some participants respectfully felt that there were specific skills lacking amongst their colleagues. Given the extreme special-needs numbers in each class, the reported extensive numbers of behavioural problem students, and the fact that a significant number of teachers are new or recently new to the profession, a need for ongoing training exists. One person interviewed commented, "I also don't find that you have teachers who are—how can I put this—teachers who have enough background in the different methodologies of teaching." In addition, reserve teachers must deal with the disadvantages that come with professional isolation from other schools and teachers.

Need to Value Early Education: A few people mentioned that the community and schools do not value early childhood education. This left many reserve students behind mainstream students from the very beginning of the school learning process. "A lot of people seem to have the attitude that kindergarten is more of a play time. . . . It seems that kindergarten seems to be pulled out from the school system; it's not a part of it."

Legacy of Government Control: According to one participant, the fundamental problem within the school system is historical. Despite superficial aspects in improvements of local control, the tools, power, political courage or understandings are missing for effective change. One Native participant contended:

> The system is an old system. In this particular school we're under the DIA [Department of Indian Affairs] system. . . . We're still in the dinosaur age because we're still dealing with a system that needs to evolve. . . . We do have control of our education, and we should make it better. . . . I think that's the key. We've got to get rid of the Indian Affairs ghost. We're still dealing with . . . how it was ten years ago or fifteen years ago, the whole philosophy of how things were done, we still have that.

Staff Compensation and Appreciation: Many teachers perceived that they were not appreciated. They felt that appreciation was seldom expressed because parents thought that they were in the community only for the money, students were permitted to be verbally abusive with staff, and there was no job security. One teacher commented that

> they don't make you feel welcome when you come here. Yes, they give you a job, and bang! You come in and you do your thing, and that's about it. I got to know most of the people on this reserve because I became principal and I had to network, and I got to know who's who, what's what, who controls what. To me, there should be a formal banquet for all new teachers coming in, an orientation, and "Here we are; this is what we want to know." There's poor communication between the Director, the staff, and the Chief and Council.

Many of those interviewed felt that the bands and school administrators should ensure that teachers are provided with salary and compensation packages equal to those of their provincial counterparts. Informal checking during the interview revealed that salaries, and to some extent benefits, seemed close to those of the provincial counterparts, but the teaching staff still felt uncomfortable about the compensation issue. One problem seemed to relate to security, accountability, and trust in regards to the bands' reliability to fulfill its responsibilities to pay pension, medical, and other benefit plans regularly and on time. It was thought that it would be helpful if there was a procedure for staff to verify that the employer is meeting its obligations with the appropriate insuring agencies (e.g., disability, CPP, etc.). Some teachers claimed to know about cases in which employer insurance payments were not made, and/or they were just insecure about this matter.

Test and Teacher Evaluation: Some teachers feared that they are being judged by the tests achievement levels alone, and not by improved student performance and what else happens in the classes. One participant shared, "There is a problem with what is done with results. The bands sometimes use them as indicators of teacher performance." Another person commented that "the attitude is that if the kids don't . . . pass the

achievement tests, then the 3/6/9 teacher isn't doing his/her job. That seems to be the predominant attitude at school."

Simplify Special Funding: It was suggested that Indian and Northern Affairs act as a clearinghouse for all funding proposals and contributions related to Native people. The reasons for this are that people turn to Indian and Northern Affairs for any matter relating to Native people, and the department is aware of community needs and has field workers in place. Given the difficulty that public and government agencies have in becoming aware of all possible special-project funding, it seemed logical to some participants that one organization act as the clearinghouse for proposals that relate to Native people. It was suggested that the originating department could still set the terms, evaluate proposals, and monitor and advise community programs; but IAND would be the coordinating agency for all programs related to the Native schools and communities. A "one-stop-shopping approach" for the school might benefit the communities and ensure that programs are fairly available to all who might benefit from them. Field workers and other front-line specialists could advise communities on how to access funds and suggest proposals when they see related needs. It was not meant to suggest that a federal agency increase its control over the communities. However, a simplification of the processes and a more effective means of communicating programs and assistance possibilities was desired.

Problems with Social Promotions: As explained by participants, the philosophical rationale of social promotions is not matching practical classroom experiences. Teachers recognized that there are a very high number of students who would be retained if a policy of complete grade achievement as a requirement for promotion was followed. In this case their school would have a disproportional number of classes in the lower grades and few in the higher end. In addition, bottlenecks would exist in curriculum transition grades such as Grades 5 or 6. The practical issue is that no extra assistance exists to meet the needs of the very low students who are moved ahead. They continue to struggle with their peers and eventually turn to negative behaviours out of frustration or embarrassment or because they are not skilled in alternatives, which affects the entire class. Teachers also knew that before social promotion was practiced, these students would be retained in lower grades until they dropped out of school because of the embarrassment of being with younger students. Social promotion has been successful in keeping these students in

school. However, they have not learned much more because the required support has not been added. According to the participants, this issue must be seen in terms of a very large percentage of the students in the school who are in this predicament.

Additional Comments

1. Native schools might unintentionally inflate grades by not focusing on the entire curriculum and/or by teachers losing touch with mainstream standards after working in single-school and professionally isolated communities.

2. Native schools require mechanisms to ensure consistency in grade assessment for every grade.

3. New teachers need thorough and frequent support as they learn to become teachers of Native students.

4. Teacher expectations are important to create a successful learning environment.

5. More proactive efforts to deal with student failure are required.

6. The 10-month school year, with its numerous holiday breaks, may be counter-productive for Native students because once the school attendance and work patterns are broken, they are not always re-established.

7. Some Native students tire and then cease to try during testing. Therefore, at the teacher's discretion the tests could be modularized and/or 15-minutes breaks could be allowed in the middle.

8. Perhaps because of poor sleep, learning is not maintained from year to year.

9. Students have a fear of doing well in school and being ridiculed as a "school boy/girl."

10. Staff orientations for each school, community, and region should be held.

11. Athletics is a significant motivator for many Aboriginal students. It allows for the pursuit of excellence in the physical realm, which is an area in which the students are generally very good. This athletic success, discipline, dedication, and achievement are based on skills that can transfer to the classroom.

12. Tests are not appropriate because they do not account for the full environment of a student.

13. Communities and families are missing a vision of how to succeed.

14. A review of the Provincial Achievement Test should be conducted in terms of its test validity for Native students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF DATA

The educators participating in this research study seemed frustrated with the fact that they were not in a position to provide an education that is tailored to meet the learning needs, styles, and comfort of the community and its students. They struggled with whether this was due to inappropriate approaches, insufficient resources, cultural differences, community and student reasons, or unknown reasons. This chapter will explore these issues in greater detail.

The previous chapter presented the data findings by question. In addition, conceptual labels were given to relevant data. This chapter discussion elaborates on the data through researcher interpretations and references to similar data and related literature. Through this process themes emerge; and the data and related literature have been organized within these themes. A later chapter organizes these themes into what Corbin and Strauss (1990) described as a *conceptual scheme*. Denzin (1994) commented that "in the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself; . . . the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of what has been learned" (p. 500). Denzin called making sense of what has been learned *the art of interpretation*. As many researchers and academics have pointed out, interpretation is not free from influence from the interpreter's personal background, experience, and educational preparation. I have attempted to be authentically open to the views of those participating in this study and the messages contained within the related literature, and to be true to the purpose of this study. However, as mentioned above, there are no truly objective interpretations. One way to turn this handicap into a strength is to consider the non-Aboriginal writer as a translator or as a broker between the Native community and non-Native educators and readers. My mainstream educational experiences prohibit me from having the same understandings that an indigenous person may have. However, the relatively extensive experiences that I have had with Aboriginal people and Native schools allow a significant degree of understanding. This understanding, explained from a mainstream perspective, should enhance non-Aboriginal educators' and readers' ability to meet the needs of Native students and their communities. In Native education there are

extremely powerful and insightful writings created by Aboriginal authors and researchers. Sometimes these seminal works are embedded in such a great deal of contemporary Native reality, culture, and wisdom that the non-Aboriginal reader is unable to fully grasp the entire meaning. Perhaps my non-Native cross-cultural understandings and experience can allow for cultural translation, meaningful interpretation, and implementation strategies that will benefit those who are non-Native. Perhaps non-Aboriginals, as Denzin indicated, will find my writing boldly told, but that it will not "shock or brutalize, or alienate the reader" (Carver; as cited in Denzin, p. 505).

The process used in this research study was to incorporate field notes and transcribed oral, taped interviews into a document created for each participant. Each document was analyzed so that the participants' "messages" could be extracted and given a "defining label or concept." Corbin and Strauss (1990) acknowledged that concept labelling places researcher "interpretations on the data" (p. 29). Therefore, there was a great deal of researcher discretion in determining whether participants' comments were "on topic" or had value for this study. The participants' thoughts and comments were represented as much as possible. As this process took place, new concepts emerged, and established concepts were restated or refined. These were all recorded and compiled on individual sheets with different, but related concepts grouped close together. Corbin and Strauss referred to labelling a group of related concepts as "statements of relationships" (p. 29). In this analysis the refining, relabelling, and reviewing of previously transcribed documents were very frequent. This proved to be helpful in retracing, because it resulted in validating, refining, or rejecting concepts. Fortunately, all transcripts were coded and referenced (untraceable and for the researcher's use only). The use of a computer and word processor greatly aided the organization and accuracy of this process.

Researcher analysis of transcripts produced 50 interviewee concepts. These were grouped or arranged by theme as they appeared relevant based upon my interpretation and personal experience, and related literature. Eventually, the data analysis produced six overall categories with a number of subthemes in each. These are discussed in this chapter. These themes and categories have been shared with an advisor and selected colleagues. It was important to this process to legitimate or reject my findings and/or the views of my colleagues by returning to the field documents/transcripts and by searching

for similar or challenging views within the literature or experience of others. This was extensive and is represented in Chapter 5 as a significant part of the discussion. Chapters 6 and 7 organize this into a framework for reserve schools. The rationale for this approach is explained in the recommendation overview, found in Chapter 6.

This discussion is divided into the following sections: confusion in school identity, confusion in instructional practices, school and community relationships, management and leadership, family and community issues, and government services. The division of the discussion into these themes allows convenient reading and analysis. However, it should be noted that there is considerable overlap between categories, and issues may exist in more than one category.

Confusion in School Identity

In many of the Native schools involved in this research study, a community basic was missing. The schools were predominantly controlled by mainstream Canadian educators and organized in ways comfortable and relevant to these educators. However, as Darnell and Hoem (1996) explained, if Native education is to support Native students, it must be different from the system used by mainstream society. "Since different societies have to solve different problems, they need different educational systems. . . . If the system is planned without taking this into consideration, it means that the school will not meet the needs of different sub-societies" (p. 147). Darnell and Hoem further explained that indigenous people need an educational system "structured to solve problems connected with the maintenance of their cultural heritage and values and the transmission of these to future generations" (p. 147). A fundamental problem with the Native schools studied was the absence of a process that was truly natural to the students and parents. According to Lipka (1990), "Adapting the classroom environment towards the natal culture can, under certain conditions, make a positive difference" (p. 20). He also felt that learning is more successful and able to be transferred to the students' everyday lives when "there is symmetry between the classroom environment and the community" (p. 27). This understanding highlights the importance and educational value of Aboriginal programming, local teachers, educational assistants, and local staff in general.

Participants in this research study did not reject or present themselves as against Aboriginal culture in the school. However, very few brought this up as a critical need or missing ingredient. There was also a tendency to see a separation between school and family roles in the education of students. Some participants saw teaching language and culture as the role of the family, particularly when schools have such limited resources and time to accomplish the current curriculum requirements. Rindone (1988) referred to pseudo Native education, which is a system that is designed to assimilate Native people into mainstream American society through education. She also discussed quasi education, which encourages reforms in mainstream education, making it more culturally relevant, supportive, and appropriate for Native students. However, Native education needs to go beyond the reform of the mainstream education systems. This Rindone referred to as true Native education; she stated that this emphasizes both high and quality academics and the culture of Native students: "The purpose of Native education is to transmit Native culture and knowledge and develop the skills and talents needed to function successfully in modern tribal society and in the multiple societies of the United states and the world " (p. 5). According to Hampton (2000), there are five definitions of First Nations education:

> Traditional education, as in the forms of education practised by First Nations before non-First Nations schools were introduced; education for assimilation, as in non-First Nations education applied to First Nations with the goal of assimilation; education by First Nations, as in education administered and/or delivered by First Nations using non-First Nations curriculum, methods, and structures; education for self-determination, as in First Nations-controlled education with the goal of self-determination; First Nations education sui generis, as in First Nations education as a thing of its own kind, based on the cultures and spirit of First Nations, designed and implemented by First Nations. (p. 209)

The single most influential educational condition that Geenen (1998) identified for Native American students was the social and psychological climate of the school. An example of this is the Joe Duquette High School in Saskatchewan (not part of this research study). This school has the primary needs of its Native students as its priority and first objective. Central to the school environment and programming are the well-being of its learners and their support and caregiver network:

> Reiterating the focus on healing, the first objective calls for an environment that encourages and develops feelings of "worthwhileness, increased self-esteem, and a stronger Indian identity." The remainder emphasize the educational environment. It should be one which (1) "focuses on Indian culture, language, and life both historical and contemporary"; (2) which "explores Indian and non-Native community values, needs, and the decision-making process involved in social, economic, and cultural matters"; (3) which "strengthens academic and social functioning, enabling students to acquire a greater competency in society"; (4) where students "have the opportunity to upgrade their educational credentials leading to better educational or occupational opportunities"; and (5) one which "enables students to reach their potential in academic endeavours." The other two objectives call for opportunity for increased parental participation and the involvement of Elders and other native people in the school. (Haig-Brown, Archibald, Reigner, & Smith-Hodgson, 1997, p. 49)

Despite the fact that few participants in this research study saw the need for a greater role for Aboriginal culture in their schools, on-site observations, transcript analysis, and the related literature indicate that Native cultural is integral. The absence of a significant Aboriginal cultural presence is a reason for the lack of deep student connection, understanding, and therefore failure. It was observed that the schools were reaching many students; however, the ability to reach all students, or a significant majority, was lacking.

School as an Aboriginal Community

What's required in the schools involved in this research study was an all-encompassing viewpoint that is both a philosophy and an action base for a Native school. This concept is presented in this thesis as "School as an Aboriginal Community." The Canadian mainstream education concept of community-based schools is similar in many ways to that of a true Aboriginal community school. This concept demonstrates that a school can achieve government mandates within a variety of contexts and specific community-valued objectives and services. The fundamental philosophies, goals, approaches, routines, programs, and daily priorities are to be based on that of the community or special parent group. Therefore, in theory, schools in different communities or with differing parent populations will be unique. The current drastic failure rates of Native reserve students demonstrates that most will not succeed in a school that is drastically foreign to them. Perley (1993) claimed that the low academic

performance of "Aboriginal students is a reflection of their colonized status in Canadian society. The education system adopted by the dominant group has not been geared to allow the colonized Aboriginal members to succeed in that system" (p.125).

In this research study some schools reflected or mirrored the communities; others tried to be part of or respond to the community. However, this is in no way sufficient. Native schools in this research study seemed to be on a continuum of community integration. Some schools had Native principals and counsellors, and one had a Native Director of Education; another school was searching for Native leadership at this level. Yet it seems that they remained schools that in essence and at fundamental and pivotal points were no different from mainstream Canadian schools.

The unique needs of effective Native education, as well as the healing and the prevention of individual and community dysfunction, is possible only with an education system that is a Native community entity. The title of the book *Making the Spirit Dance Within* (Haig-Brown et al., 1997) is an insightful and concise mandate for all Native schools striving to foster success. The book's subtitle, *Joe Duquette High School and an Aboriginal Community*, leads us from the mandate to the method. Only by being interwoven with the Aboriginal community will students' personal, ancestral, and community spirits "dance within" them. In turn, their cognitive and academic spirit may "dance" and do so within their learning environment. This is more than being associated with, based on, or part of an Aboriginal community. It means that the school is an Aboriginal community in its own right. This is consistent with mainstream school literature that favours schools seeing themselves as communities of learners, with students assuming roles and responsibilities and dealing with the dynamics associated with this. Only by being an Aboriginal community itself will the critical and pivotal elements of the school's processes and experiences genuinely emerge in a way that creates and fosters Native student success. Haig-Brown et al.'s subtitle would be a clearer directive if the "and" were removed. This would result in the subtitle *Joe Duquette High School: An Aboriginal Community*.

The order and priority given to particular efforts are crucial to success. It is not to be a school striving to be an Aboriginal community, but an Aboriginal community developing into the appropriate educational service for the students. There will be many

false starts, failures, and inadequate efforts. However, with the orientation above, when failure occurs, the school's default positions and approaches are likely to be Aboriginal. This will mean that new solutions will have an increased likelihood for success. Critically, it will also mean that student comfort will be maintained at all times. This ensures that attendance, spirit, and academic engagement are maintained at all times. When difficult periods exist, resources are scarce, or emergencies occur, the school will naturally consolidate or fall back on positions that are natural and comfortable to the Aboriginal students.

Interviewees in this research study felt that only a minority of students attend school regularly and make efforts to receive an education. Students are often at school for social reasons or because they have to be there. Wehlage, Fernandez, Rutter, Smith, and Lesko (1989) suggested that a student's perception of his/her "school membership is developed through social bonding. This is generated by attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in the institution. One of these bonding elements, involvement, is particularly important to any conception of effective schooling" (p. 176).Therefore, school membership is the foundation upon which educational engagement is built. Educational engagement and school membership are critical goals that schools must actively promote to help students arrive at the important outcomes of academic and personal student development (Wehlage et al.). Similarly, Radda et al. (1998) commented that "affiliation is commonly thought to be an important motivator for American Indian students" (p. 14).

In Rhythm With Community

Schools in this research study were not only disconnected from the communities, but also out of sync with the lives and events of the children they taught. Teachers were frustrated by the fact that the majority of students were not in school at certain times of the year and when major events were occurring. Powwows, healing weeks, community governance and band matters, and regional tribe meetings were all cited as disruptions to the school year. However, the community welcomes the children to these activities because they see them as valuable educational, cultural, and personal-development events. These valuable events are increasing the school and family tensions. They are unintentionally resulting in an unspoken school and family 'tug of war,' with children

being the pawns and the losers. According to Hookimaw-Witt (1998), "Education for Native people can be successful only when it has been grown from within the culture of the people" (p. 159). The above approach will see the school as one with the rhythm of the community. The rhythm of the community is a collective representation of an unspoken force that influences all of those who are intimate with the community. It flows with positive, negative, and indifferent tides throughout the year. Daily student success is dramatically affected by this. Yet mainstream-based Native schools rarely realize what is happening; neither do they have the capacity to integrate community events with the school programs. When the school is out of rhythm with the community, there are significant learning and community bridging opportunities missed. The school must be part of the rhythm of the community to have the school and students' academic, personal, and ancestral spirit dance.

Deyhle and Swisher (1997) provided an example using Native cultures. She commented that in successful Native schools, culture is not an add-on to the curriculum, but is part of the structure of the school. "This form of empowerment, in which the school is closely in rhythm with the community, increases the school success of children" (p. 175). Effective schooling of Native students "embraces Native culture and language as a resource to work from, rather than a barrier to overcome, local communities are effective agents in shaping this process" (p. 176).

It is imperative that the schools in this research study harmonize the relationship between the school and community culture. This is critical to avoid the devastating consequences of cultural conflict that have plagued contemporary Native education. Darnell and Hoem(1996) stated that

> if the cultural background of the students and the culture of the school lack symmetry there will be conflict. The cultural influence of the school will tend to weaken the self-concept and identity of the students, render their patrimonial background irrelevant and desocialization and resocialization will occur. The socialization process taking place in a well-balanced school will connect the students to essential elements and sectors of the society in which the school is found. (p. 271)

Spirituality and Cultural Programming

It is easy for the non-Native educators involved in this research study to underestimate the depth and effectiveness of traditional Native educational approaches. Readers who have not personally or intimately experienced learning through these approaches might discard the methodologies as lower level. More (1987) raised these insights:

> We know that legends and stories were the primary method of teaching values and attitudes (Scollon & Scollon, 1983; Tafoya, 1982; John, 1972). The legends and stories often had highly symbolic meanings and involved intricate relationships—an aspect often ignored by non-Indians. The use of symbolism, anthropomorphism (giving human characteristics to animals, gods and objects), animism (giving life and soul to natural phenomena such as rocks, trees, winds, etc.) and metaphors, appears to have been an extremely effective method of teaching very complex concepts. These methods allowed the learner to understand at his or her level of cognitive and emotional development. When the learner recalled the story or legend a few years later, it acquired an even deeper meaning - use of legends therefore being somewhat similar to the notion of the spiral curriculum in today's education system. (p. 4)

This demonstrates that what appear to non-Native people as simple and unnecessary programs may be effective educational tools in the context of the Native culture. This also points out the high level of cognitive processing that is a result of these methodologies. Effective Aboriginal school culture can have an impact on student learning. It sets a foundation and facilitates learning processes in suitable and critical ways. Geenen (1998) found that Indian-based educational programs contribute to positive educational outcomes. Although she could not conclude that culture-based programs enhance conditions that are commonly identified by mainstream schools as contributors to academic success (e.g., quality instruction, achievement motivation, parental involvement), she found that they did improve the social and psychological climate of the school. One parent who was a school council member from Joe Duquette School (not in this study) commented that the school held a daily sweetgrass ceremony "to try and get the students in the proper frame of mind, to try and settle them down and be able to open them up so that . . . they will be more receptive" (Haig-Brown et al., 1997, p. 162). These approaches also focus the school officials who are involved with Aboriginal students. Deyhle and Swisher (1997) stated that Aboriginal programs are valuable to

teacher/school and student relationships, because "Native languages and culturally matched pedagogy can have an impact on what teachers do to Indian students and how students react to their schooling" (p. 164).

Mainstream schools generally desire a values and social life skills program that is supported by the community. However, given the cultural diversity that exists within each urban school population, these schools rarely achieve such a match. Reserve schools generally have a highly unified community on the issues of Aboriginal values and spiritual focus. A highly unified community is a rare educational opportunity that should be capitalized on and enjoyed.

For the schools involved in this study, to achieve a harmony between school and community it may be helpful to find commonalities. For example, there are overlapping aspects to mainstream values-orientated programs and Aboriginal spirituality. For instance, mainstream religions have embraced this by adapting traditional Aboriginal practices and spirituality into their practices. Couture (1987) referred to "value bridges between the two cultures which can be functional, defining, or organizing principles that can be applied to solving Native Education problems" (p. 180). Possible common values include the development of individual and group character, self-reflection and discipline, and higher values and service to others. These can serve as staff and student common points and exist as meaningful opportunities to create a shared school purpose, dialogue, and focus, thereby creating a meaningful harmony between the school and community (Couture).

Current educational practices such as character-based education (Koch, 2000) and social and emotional learning curricula (Ellias et al., 1997) attempt to address issues of student apathy and loss of purpose in school and life. Kessler (2000) suggested that children suffer through the spiritual emptiness of the modern times, and the way to offset the destructive apathy of many children is through facilitating expressions and needs for deep connection, meaning and purpose, silence, joy, creativity, transcendence, and initiation. Classrooms need to offer the gateways to these compelling spiritual needs. Without healthy forums and avenues of exploration, young people seek their own gateways, "sometimes in destructive ways like drugs, sex, suicide, hazing, and even murder" (Foreword).

The character-based-education emphasis provides a simple approach that is shared by most parents and educators; that is, developing character virtues and a work ethic within children and youth. These approaches simultaneously serve the goals of personal and social development while meeting academic needs (Koch, 2000). Such educational approaches have a generic similarity to the ultimate purposes and meanings of Aboriginal spirituality and traditional teachings. Watt-Cloutier et al. (2000) explained that, traditionally, knowledge, judgement, skill, and character virtues are holistically learned and never separated. He stated that "the technical skills of handling the gun or harpoon are taught at the same time as the character skills of courage, respect, determination, persistence, and patience" (p. 118). Similarly, "when a young woman is taught to prepare and sew skins and materials for clothing, she is also taught the appropriate character skills to go along with her creativity" (p. 118). Watt-Cloutier et al. added that in schools such things are "frequently pulled apart and never reassembled. Schools spend much of their energy teaching and testing knowledge; yet knowledge by itself does not lead to wisdom, independence, or power" (p. 118). Another respected educational approach is restitution (Gossen, 1998), a behaviour-correction approach that focuses on healing rather than shaming and the development of an internal moral sense rather than forced conformity. Conditions are created so that the individual can correct mistakes and return to the group strengthened. Couture (1987) explained that a common aspect of all Native values is the process of an "individual being and becoming a unique person, responsible for his or her own life and actions in the context of significant group situations" (p. 181).

The student character-building opportunities in both Native and non-Native approaches that focus on self-discipline and values are significant. These values can be a personal challenge and ask the individuals to "stretch" themselves. Watt-Cloutier et al. (2000) believed that

> the hunger for challenge is so evident in our youth that, in order to see it, you only have to look at the popularity of arcade halls, or the popularity of video games in people's living rooms. Our youth are not looking to exercise their fingers or hand-eye coordination as they play these games; they are looking for ways to challenge and build their character, the very thing that traditional skills offer but that is denied to them by most of what is offered in the schools or elsewhere. (p. 117)

During this research study, participants referred to unfocussed and undisciplined students who existed with little or no personal work ethic. Poor attendance and poor student behaviour were a significant concern. According to MacMullin (as cited in Metais, 1997), "Misbehaviour and low academic achievement may result from students' social and emotional difficulties, coupled with an inability to use socially skilful ways to gain teacher support" (p. 2). The more socially skilled the student, the more effective he or she is in resolving inconsistencies between behaviour and expectations. This highlights the importance of acknowledging and dealing positively with students' emotions. The physiology of the brain requires that "learning and strong emotions of anger, love, concern, hate, fear, excitement, sadness, or jealousy need to be addressed before students can effectively solve problems or reflect critically" (Gibbs; as cited in Metais, 1997, p. 3).

Native schools in this study could benefit from an Aboriginal focus and spirituality. The only issue seems to be whether this will be a curricular priority and whether it will be meaningfully implemented. To be effective, these practices need to be part of the daily school experience. According to Haig-Brown et al. (1997), Joe Duquette School's (not part of this study) successes and its uniqueness are "based primarily in the consistent and insistent commitment of all involved to a focus on Aboriginal spirituality within the school and all the relationships there" (p. 33). The parents' council of the school commented that "if we pulled the spiritual component and the Elders out of our school, the school becomes just another school" (p. 33).

Participants in this research study referred to the low school graduation rates, social welfare dependency, and addictions as significant in forms of their critical mass within the community. This demonstrates that there are incredible odds against a Native child growing up to be a fully competent, self-sufficient, contributing adult in either culture. Those Native adults who are contributing positively have reached this point after going through significant healing journeys of cultural self-discovery. According to Warry (1998), the moment of realization that leads to 'ending denial' "is often associated with an epiphany of cultural awareness. For a great many people recovery and culture esteem go hand in hand. Healing journeys are spoken of as lifelong searches for personal identity, cultural awareness, and spiritual understanding" (p. 139).

Had the schools involved in this research study used traditional culture as a basis for education, it is possible that the inordinate number of individuals who fall into personal despair might have been reduced. Young people could have had a chance to be saved by their culture before they were lost . Aboriginal culture should be the priority focus of the school. To omit this is simply to continue the failed or compromised performance of reserve students. This may not seem to be the mandate of schooling for some readers. However, schools do serve the hidden culture of society. Goodlad (1984) referred to the hidden curriculum as the implicit curriculum. Schools explicitly teach mathematics, reading, and other subject areas. They also teach a great deal implicitly through the ways in which they present the explicit curriculum; for example, "through the kind of rules they impose, and even through social and physical settings, ... schools implicitly teach values" (p. 30). Significant and meaningful cultural programming also offers a way for students to be comfortable and successful in school. Many of those good at cultural activities might be those students doing poorly in the mainstream school activities. This is a critical point because students "whose talents and abilities are neglected will find it necessary to defend their dignity by rejecting the legitimacy of educational engagement. Schools cannot reward a select few and continue to expect engagement from the rest" (Wehlage et al., 1989, p. 179).

Repeatedly, Native culture continues to emerge as an integral aspect of successful schooling for Aboriginal schools. This need for a culture grounding and lifestyle exists for all ages within the Aboriginal community. Warry (1998) has written:

> Given the obvious link between healing and cultural identity, the government should invest in a range of cultural programs that would enable communities to further explore and experience their traditions. . . . An investment in cultural institutions is an investment in social health. (p. 224)

When schools support cultural activities, they often depend on volunteers or people who will work at minimum pay or on an occasional basis. This approach demonstrates that cultural programs are not truly valued. It also leads to the hiring of "whoever is available." Volunteers can do many things; however, there is a financial cost to the coordination of events. In addition, resource people (healers, dancers, etc.) require accommodation, travel, honoraria, and other aspects of events. Contemporary Native

culture will continue to disappear with only a distorted, negative, modernized community culture to fill in the void unless dedicated resource people are compensated for these jobs. School teachers are highly valued and are paid to instruct. In the contemporary world, Native culture should be seen in the same way. In fact, medicine men, culture specialists, have always been paid; in the "old days" it may have been with life-sustaining animal meat or robes. This kind of commodity exchange and money are in essence the same thing.

If Aboriginal cultural programming is a solution to significant school issues, then it should be a priority staffing and funding issue. Other goals, including mainstream objectives, may be important, but they should be funded as a second priority. In fact, to have cultural programming anywhere but first will mean that it will never be authentically implemented. The mainstream curriculum demands prioritizing; it grows and grows, taking as much time and resources as it can. It then claims to need more. To guard against this and to serve a specific and unique group of students, full-time staff, such as an elder-in-residence, a cultural specialist, and language teachers are required. I once heard it said that "you place your money where your values are."

Mainstream curriculum still has significant roles in Native-centred community and student educational development. Some Native participants in this research study stated that they saw their parents differently when they learned objectively about how they had been treated or why their parents and grandparents were not able to fulfill all of their parental obligations. For example, mainstream and community Aboriginal history is a great asset to healing and clarification. Native adolescent students would benefit from a clear and complete knowledge of the residential school experience; in many cases they have been directly or indirectly negatively affected by it. Similarly, they would benefit from knowing about the effects of years of dependency and government efforts of assimilation and colonization. This is not to foster hatred towards other groups, but rather to facilitate the healing and understandings that will help their generations move forward. By being aware of global examples of the power and consequences of assimilation and colonization practices, they gain insight into why their communities and families lack skills, independence, and certain competencies associated with today's society. This knowledge provides new insights and understanding for viewing the personal and

community world around them, as well as a foundation for their own personal development. Schools can meet this programming need. The content is appropriate for all students, Native and non-Native, and can be seen as crucial knowledge to develop tolerance and understanding between Native and non-Native cultures today. It will also help to avoid the moral wrongs of Canada's recent past. These topics incorporated into school subjects provide the opportunity for a high level and variety of cognitive skills. This idea was also suggested by high school dropout students in Ontario. Many felt that relevant Native courses would provide interest for Native students; however, they cautioned that it must be taught meaningfully, in a manner appropriate to Native people, or the Native students would see it as another White history course and drop out (Mackay & Myles, 1989).

Some of the educators in this study commented that their students were capable and intelligent, yet it was difficult to get them through the "hard concepts." It was easy to excuse this as a lifestyle issue, as perhaps a lack of sleep. However, they may just as likely be instructional-based issues. Freire (as cited in Marker, 2000) stated that "the learners' capacity for critical knowing—well beyond mere opinion—is established in the process of unveiling their relationships with the historical-cultural world in and with which they exist" (p. 33). Marker also shared Freire's view that an historic understanding of the most recently created forms of education and discourse produces the most expansive and powerful consciousness (p. 35). Hornberger (1994) saw school as more meaningful for minority students if the teachers and their students produce school knowledge. She suggested that teachers have them tell their own stories and create school and personal histories that will be valued by others at the level of school and community. This work can be very meaningful to students and involve higher level processes if it is "collected, produced, and measured against themes generic to critical studies of schooling: culture, race, class, gender, power, and voice" (McLaughlin, 1994, p. 57). It must also be measured in ways that make sense to those with the most to win and lose from their production, so that we weave the texts into what the children already know and need to understand; so that schooling enables teachers and their students to contest and change, rather than serve and perpetuate, systems of silencing, exploitation, and harm (p. 57).

With these instructional techniques in mind, an Aboriginal school requires an overall foundation and relevant philosophies. As with any system, Native education requires a standard to reach for and against which it can measure itself. Hampton (as cited in Barnhardt & Kirkness, 1991) suggested that there are 12 critical areas that each Aboriginal school should offer and judge itself by:

> Spirituality—an appreciation for spiritual relationships, Service—the purpose of education is to contribute to the people, Diversity—Indian Education must meet the standards of diverse tribes and communities, Culture—the importance of culturally determined ways of thinking, communicating and living, Tradition—continuity with tradition, Respect—the relationship between the individual and the group recognized as mutually empowering, History—appreciation of the facts of Indian history, including the loss of the continent and continuing racial and political oppression, Relentlessness—commitment to the struggle for good schools for Indian children, Vitality—recognition of the strength of Indian people and culture, Conflict—understanding the dynamics and consequences of oppression, Place — the importance of sense of place, land and territory, Transformation—commitment to personal and societal change. (p. 9)

Cultural Partnership

A few participants in this research study commented that they wanted to work in a Native school so that they could learn about the people and culture. Ironically, many non-Natives who choose to work in Native communities begin eager to learn about Native culture. However, few open their classrooms to Native lifestyles or pursue this knowledge persistently and meaningfully. Aboriginal culture and spirituality provide an opportunity for students, staff, and the community to have a shared partnership and a shared learning experience. The family and school partnership should not be unidirectional. A family can provide its children with positive Native culture and values, and the school can respect, honour, and incorporate these into its programs, operations, and purpose. Culture can be seen as a way to support student learning and can be a means to build effective, equal, and respectful school and family relationships rather than an obstacle or a neutral aspect of learning. Ideally, there is a meaningful, natural, and respectful integration of the existing education processes of family, community, traditions, contemporary lifestyle, and school. Rindone (1988) commented that "parents and community members must feel that the school is an extension of the learning that

occurs in the home and vice versa. Opportunities for parents and elders to participate in educational activities with students are critically important" (p. 13). To accomplish this, Rindone envisioned the familiar presence of parents and elders in classrooms participating in teaching as well as in the lunchrooms, gyms, and playgrounds. She extended this throughout the community by suggesting that "the presence of students and teachers during the school day in tribal offices, business offices, fields, lakes, stores, hospital, shops, and elsewhere should be as normal as the presence of anyone else in these locations" (p. 13). Summarizing the community's role in teaching, she stated, "The talents and skills of a variety of people in the community need to be available and used in the educational process both inside and outside of the school buildings" (p. 13).

Some of the participants in this research study felt that their community had examples of positive traditional Native homes. In their opinion, the students coming from authentic traditional lifestyles demonstrated positive attitudes, behaviours, and, consequently, daily achievement. This comment relates to traditional households and those without dysfunctional addictions or behaviours. At least one participant speculated that traditional Native family practices support school performance. This is possibly a crucial piece of the Native education puzzle for many, if not all, students. The natural preparation that traditional teachings and practices provide students has gone unconsidered for many years. This has been substituted with foreign approaches that, despite good intentions, do not work. Despite this, there has been little research or discussion on this issue, which is unfortunate because it could be beneficial and move discussions beyond "motherhood statements" about the value of Native spirituality. Lewis (as cited in Light & Martin, 1996) has written that Native families have three strengths: "(a) the helping systems that operate within the family, (b) the courage and optimism obtained from spiritual life religion, and (c) the respect for each other and personal relationships which forms the basis for later learning" (p. 1). He also added that "these strengths can help Indian families face poverty . . . and are a source of courage and confidence" (p. 2).

It is unfortunate that all Native educators in this study could not see the wonderful, supportive mechanisms that may exist in the world of their students. The schools did not seem to realize that they were not only failing to benefit from the family

support systems, but were also hindering it, which has numerous negative effects for the students. Almost every interviewee commented on student self-esteem. In modern education cultural security and identity, and self-esteem have been found to be a critical part of success for Native students. According to Berry (1999), a positive "consolidated cultural identity exists when there is consistency among the components; a confused identity is present when there is inconsistency or uncertainty" (p. 6). Deyhle (as cited in Deyhle & Swisher, 1997) concluded that a culturally

> non-responsive curriculum is a greater threat to those whose own cultural 'identity' is insecure. . . . Although the inclusion of language, history and cultural information was important, . . . a 'culturally sensitive' curriculum is not the solution or sole key to increasing school success. (p. 137)

Deyhle also suggested that the most successful young Native women "were those who had the support of their community and families and who had a strong ethnic identity" (p. 137). Coggins et al. (1997) stated that "maintaining and acting on American Indian values, such as living in a traditional community, participating in traditional ceremonies, and being a member of a strong family, are all associated with higher grades in school and lower drop-out rates" (p. 3).

Native cultural values can be a source of inner strength, according to Couture (1987). He placed the responsibility on the school to learn and benefit from these traits: "These values are the roots to a number of characteristic behaviours, the understanding of which must be regarded as essential to educational planning and development" (p. 182). Students will bring their home experience to school daily. Light and Martin (1996) commented that "children reflect their families' strengths, weaknesses, attitudes and values. In order for teachers to meet their students' needs, they must understand and appreciate the values and relationships within the students' family (p. 1)."

The number of studies in this area is too few to be conclusive and generalizable on this basis. However, Coggins et al. (1997) speculated that "it may be that parental holding and teaching traditional values to their children act as a cultural anchor allowing these youngsters to function better both academically and socially as they venture forth into the bi-cultural world of mainstream public education" (p. 4). It could be that having a good attitude to learning and a strong work ethic could transfer to any culture and any

task. Coggins et al. also pointed out that "it would be advantageous to rural Ojibwa families to understand the importance of American Indian parental values for their young children's school performance" (p. 4). According to Couture (1987), Native values that are critical to schools to understand are the extended family systems, child-rearing practices, and the fostering of individual autonomy. He also emphasised that special behaviours and relationship styles, "such as joking and the use of humour as a form of feedback in place of direct criticism, avoidance behaviour, age-graded sensitivities and requirements, the hurt/anger/distrust syndrome, the existence of hereditary leadership patterns" (p. 182), and consensus decision making are important to acknowledge. Specifically in regards to learning styles, Couture pointed out the use of analogy in place of linear logic in teaching and problem solving. Alfred (1999) contended that there are two fundamentally opposite value systems in Aboriginal life today. Schools have a place in this problem:

> One is still rooted in traditional teachings, structures social and cultural relations; the other, imposed by the colonial state, structures and politics. This disunity is the fundamental cause of factionalism in Native communities, and it contributes significantly to the alienation that plagues them. . . . The great hope is that those systems will embody the underlying cultural values of the communities. The great fear is that they will simply replicate non-indigenous systems—intensifying the oppression (because it is self-inflicted and localized) and perpetuating the value dichotomy at the root of our problems. (p. 3)

In this research study the participants commented that community parents are not responsive to the school. Given the oppression and "value dichotomy" perception shared by the Native writer Alfred (1999), it is not surprising that parents are not active participants in the usual school processes and requirements. Contreras (1997) stated that "the school's greatest intrusion on Native culture has been to take the children away from their parents for the largest part of the day" (p. 4). Mainstream society sees school as an opportunity to learn skills and attitudes and values of their culture. However, in a Native community "the children being in the school meant that they were not in the home or community learning important Native social, cultural and behavioural skills that would sustain them in their community and environment" (p. 4).

The value dichotomy that exists between the community Native schools in this study and the community families are a fundamental issue in students' school performance. Wehlage et al. (1989), citing others, claimed that

> the engagement of at-risk students is inhibited by a number of factors, some beyond the control of schools. Engagement is promoted or discouraged by peers and experiences in the culture of the larger community. If educational engagement is to be sustained, students must perceive a congruence between the value systems of their own personal and cultural backgrounds and those of the school. Success in school must be nurtured in the cultural context in which young people are reared and develop their sense of self and future. Proactive behaviours by significant adults outside the school are needed to promote educational values and respect for educational success. (p. 178)

The creation of a "school as an Aboriginal community" allows the community, students, and families cultural and personal dignity, as well as a shared and meaningful purpose. Wong Fillmore (as cited in Reyner, 1992) stated that "schools cannot break down traditional family values and expect to have success with most students" (p. 1). He also stated that Indian parents want more of their history and culture taught in schools and that this increases the possibility of parent involvement. According to Darnell and Hoem (1996), "If there is a certain degree of continuity, each will reinforce the other in an intended and positive way" (p. 271). On the other hand, if the contrast of cultures is "too sharp and the gap too wide, the students are faced with educational challenges with which they are unable to cope. In such cases neither the school, the teacher, nor the subject will be of interest" (p. 282). Darnell and Hoem contended that this results in the students developing a "negative attitude toward themselves, believing that they are losers and eventually most become dropouts and social dissidents. This may partly explain the phenomenon of inadequate school performance" (p. 282).

The task of researching in a cross-cultural circumstance is extremely complex. This is particularly true in a dynamic context such as that in which education takes place. In this research study the participants' answers seemed to lead to more questions; sometimes the interviewees saw this and extended their dialogue, and sometimes I probed. However, the dilemmas, failings, frustrations, and successes raised were directional for this research. The lack of complete understanding and the contradictions exposed point to the complexity of the current circumstances of Native Education.

Darnell and Hoem (1996) illustrated the simple contradictions in cross-cultural schooling, as well as the possible outcomes:

> If cultural contrasts are reasonable and the cultural gap manageable, the school situation will be manageable. Students will experience success and their self-image will be that of students who are comfortable with the school and themselves. In situations where the cultural gap between the school and local community are manageable for the students and the school, but not the parents, the students will experience schooling as a constant choice between their traditional lifestyle and the outside world. In this case education will weaken the pupils' sense of belonging to their environment, thereby necessitating a new frame of reference existentially. What this will be like is hard to predict, but it will not be the traditional society, but, nevertheless, as persons with values, interests, and life styles that more than likely will link them to a different world, a world which they do not really know. The effect of this ostensibly successful school in a community with indigenous culture will create existential tensions between the identities of the younger and the elder generations. This situation can be attributed to both ordinary tensions caused by the generation gap, but more importantly to tension caused by an existential orientation that includes their patrimonial values. (p. 282)

Darnell and Hoem (1996) have demonstrated that the Aboriginal student is significantly affected by the school and community partnership. In addition, a school that involves itself with the community families will receive important feedback on culturally appropriate pedagogy, develop home and school consistency, and allow educators to connect to students' prior knowledge.

Cultural Brokers

Even with school approaches that create a holistically Native school, mainstream Canadian knowledge and culture are required curriculum. Boutte and DeFlorimonte (1991) commented that educators have the "awesome challenge of helping children prepare for success in mainstream society without negating their cultural mores, behaviour, and identity. Recognizing that proficiency in at least two cultures are a strength, educators must be careful not to degrade either culture" (p. 58). Stairs (1994; as cited in Deyhle & Swisher, 1997) stated that cultural negotiation can evolve cultural identities and is therefore an alternative to assimilation, culture loss, or isolation.

Spindler (1987) commented that teaching is a process of cultural transmission, and that most teachers are unaware of this. Grant (1985) maintained that teachers have

historically been ascribed the role of being mediators of culture. However, this has been "from the white protestant Anglo Saxon perspective, thus reflecting ethnocentrism rather than cultural relativism" (p. 97). As mentioned previously, there is also a hidden curriculum (Goodlad, 1984), which refers to the unwritten and subtle school socialization goals passed on through educator attitudes and behaviours. Educators are often unaware of these; however, they significantly affect learning and school culture. Marker (2000) asserted that Native education, with some exceptions, "has always been about cross-cultural negotiation and power differentials. It is a complex landscape of colliding interpretations of fundamental goals and purposes across the cultural barricades. In short, Indian education is about Indian-White relations" (p. 31). More specifically, "it has been, and remains, the central arena for negotiating identities and for translating the goals and purposes of the other culture" (p. 31).

In this research study participants complained about the impact of family dysfunctions (drugs and alcohol), a lack of support for school processes, the lack of parent and school relations, and students and parents having no vision for school success. These are either legitimate cultural differences that need mediating or by-products of cultural displacement and hostilities. They all point out the need for cultural brokerage between the world of school and that of the community. Schools expect Native-born and -raised students, parents, and entire communities to automatically make a transition from one culture to another. In conversation with S. Wilson (personal communication, 1997), he stated that "if teachers were able to help indigenous students make the transition from one culture to another, this . . . would greatly increase the academic success rate" Boutte and DeFlorimonte (1991) added that "educators need to be explicit about orienting children to the rules, expectations and decorum of mainstream culture as well as emphasizing the necessity of knowing when to code-switch" (p. 58). This is knowing when to use either home or school cultural style in their appropriate settings. Tierney (as cited in Boutte & DeFlorimonte, 1991) suggested a "border pedagogy," in which students learn the cultural skills required in the dominant and traditional culture. Boutte and DeFlorimonte also referred to Banks (1994) and stated, "An important goal of educators who value cultural differences is to help students develop cross-cultural competencies" (p. 59). However, according to these authors, many White teachers resist information

about cultural differences and insist that they are "colour blind." Ironically, this denial of the importance of race often results in all children being taught the same way; that is, from a typically Eurocentric perspective (Boutte & DeFlorimonte).

The Aboriginal, community-based school not only creates a familiar school experience and processes, but can also be a place to transmit Native social culture and knowledge (Stairs, 1995). From this starting point teachers are in a position to integrate mainstream values, culture, and school requirements in appropriate and progressive ways. Stairs (1995) stated, "The culture based approach to Native education recognizes teachers as the immediate agents of contact and therefore of conflict or reconciliation between diverse cultural learning-models" (p. 146). To this extent the teachers are cultural brokers.

Darnell and Hoem (1996) described a culture-based school, where educators and students are cultural brokers to each other: "The students' culture is used as a pedagogical tool to make the lesson more attractive and relevant" (p. 279). The writers also cautioned:

> This method is just a tool; it is less acceptable where the school does not actually accept the culture and background of the students and the main goal of the school is to replace the local, or Native, culture with an urban, nation-wide culture. When used in this way, the strategy is superficial and indicates only quasi-acceptance of the culture of the people since it is used as a means to extinguish it. Unfortunately, schools often function in this way. (pp. 279-280)

According to Darnell and Hoem (1996) successful schools "accept the indigenous culture on equal terms with others. In this way, school programs will integrate elements of the local culture with national and international cultures" (p. 280). Pewewardy (2001) added that "culturally responsive teachers focus on the strengths that exist in Indian families, while using a culturally accepted group pedagogy to promote social cohesion. Tribal culture can be used to strengthen group ties" (p. 8). These quotations explain how the school can be authentic to the Native students' natural life.

When schools are in the opposite position, they become part of the marginalization process. If Aboriginal schools teach in a manner that transmits only non-Native culture, this is not only a prescription for failure for most Aboriginal students, but where it is successful, it also places the schooled adult in a "marginal situation." As individuals from a minority group, they are likely to have not fully learned either their

original culture or that of the mainstream society. They will not have sufficient understandings or skills to be fully accepted in either culture. They will be on the margin of both. The personal dissonance involved in this circumstance has been outlined by Stonequist (1937):

> The third stage consists of the ways in which the individual responds to his situation; the adjustments he makes or attempts to make. He may reach a successful adjustment which permits him to be at ease again; he then evolves out of the marginal class. Again, he may fluctuate from one position to another–at one time reaching a satisfactory adjustment, then being thrown back again into a condition of conflict. Or, he may assume a role which, while it organizes his life, does not completely free his consciousness from his situation; he remains a partially adjusted marginal man. Or, lastly, the difficulties may be so overwhelming, relative to the individual's resources, that he is unable to adjust himself and so becomes disorganized. (p. 123)

Confusion in Instructional Practices

The previously discussed foundation for being an "Aboriginal school" is likely to position student comfort, self-esteem, and cognitive security in a place congruent with the learning of knowledge, the understanding involved in comprehension, and the skills of application. However, teaching is both a social and a cognitive activity; therefore the nature of the intellectual, personal, and group interactions involved are key determinants of success. The learning, mastery, retention, and transferability of what the teacher and learner are trying to accomplish are determined by a multitude of factors. In this research study, the participants seemed to be motivated to offer the highest quality of education that they could. However, teachers confessed that they were very aware that their students were struggling at the knowledge and comprehension level of Bloom's taxonomy. Application of new skills was often only a possibility, and analysis, synthesis, and evaluation were rare experiences.

In this research study the participants proudly asserted that they followed the provincial curriculum. They sincerely expressed being motivated by the desire to offer their students the same opportunities and standards that provincial school students enjoyed. The teachers also commented that this was mainly a modified version of the curriculum, and in language arts and math it is individualized to the student. At the same time, the majority of students were behind their grade-level expectations. Educators in

this research study supported provincial standards and curriculum, including the Alberta achievement test. However, it was the interviewees' judgement that special accommodations and exemptions exist that are beyond what is currently offered in the Native reserve schools.

To decide which educational approach is appropriate at any given time requires an understanding of both Native and non-Native learning, as well as an understanding of the teaching approach itself. It also requires some understanding of what is to be accomplished in the classroom.

The adoption of a particular curriculum implicitly means the adoption of the curriculum designers' larger societal goals and purpose. The classroom experience is the real expression of educational philosophies, values, priorities, and intent. According to Hookimaw-Witt (1998), nothing has "changed since residential school except that children do not have to leave their families any more in order to receive an 'education'" (p. 160). The writer also stated that "the Elders I interviewed agreed that the education presently offered to our children is part of the problem in our communities" (p. 164). She claimed that problems still prevail and that education is not neutral because curricula must be followed, and this program of study is used for legitimation and the building, recreating and maintaining of cultural ideologies (mainstream). Hookimaw-Witt claimed that a Native culture needs to "include the knowledge of the other culture. . . . [However], . . . it has to be based in our culture" (p. 163). Hookimaw-Witt (as cited in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People) further commented:

> Education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume responsibilities in their nations. . . .Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong positive Aboriginal identity. This Aboriginal identity and competence as an Aboriginal person can be reached only when the curriculum is based on the culture from which the youths draw their identity. (p. 163)

Personal identity is an active process. It is not to be an abstract concept or a superficial process. Berry (1999) maintained that "the notion of Aboriginal cultural identity implies both that such an identity is actually a part of an Aboriginal person's current self-perception, and that it has its roots in Aboriginal experiences" (p. 29). Some writers have suggested a parallel Native and mainstream curriculum. Hookimaw-Witt felt that this

educational approach will fail because it lacks an Aboriginal basis or foundation. The elders whom Hookimaw-Witt interviewed "all emphasized that education would have to be based on our own culture and that the other content, that of western culture, can be included, rather than the reverse" (p. 164).

Some interviewees commented that a reason for poor academic performance was a lack of curriculum relevance between the students' experiences and what the school was teaching. This concept of curriculum relevance refers to helping students "appreciate and build upon their customary forms of consciousness and representations as they expand their understanding of the world in which they live" (Barnhardt & Kirkness, 1991, p. 200).

Ascher (as cited in Giamati & Weiland, 1997) demonstrated this point by sharing his experiences with Navajo students and the mathematics curriculum. He found that "difficulties in performance were in fact a result of cultural influences on perceptions rather than a lack of ability. . . . Primary language and cultural exposure greatly influenced their perceptions" (p. 27). According to Ascher, language has a deep influence on a person's view of mathematical relationships. Accommodating this issue has been merely superficial. Simply changing words in word problems—for example, apples and oranges to horses and sheep—does not accommodate cultural differences and make the math problem relevant to the American Indian student. Giamati and Weiland explained that the idea of "counting sheep in the herd is not culturally relevant . . . . How can it then help the student learn mathematics? Rather than focus on the contrived, why not uncover aspects of mathematics that are culturally relevant to Native American students?" (p. 28).

Cultural differences impact on typical classroom interactions. Wax (1971; as cited in Swisher, 1990) has written:

> It has frequently been observed that Indian children hesitate to engage in an individual performance before the public gaze, especially where they sense competitive assessment against their peers and equally do not wish to demonstrate by their individual superiority the inferiority of their peers. On the other hand, where performance is socially defined as benefiting the peer society, Indians become excellent competitors (as witness their success in team athletics). (p. 1)

However, it is important not to generalize, and to recognize that within their groups, both teachers and students are individuals and may differ. The degree to which Native

individuals have adopted customs from mainstream society also varies. According to Swisher (1990), overgeneralizations can contribute to (a) stereotypic notions about the relationship between learning style and cultural group membership, (b) discriminatory practice (for example, inappropriate grouping), and (c) inappropriate excuses for failure in teaching and learning.

In this research study, teachers felt that the students in their schools were capable of being successful in school. Native educators who were interviewed proudly gave examples from their own families. All participants were able to identify many successful Native students and comment on their characteristics. However, all agreed that this was far too infrequent. One possible explanation is a deceleration in school learning known as the "Matthew effect." This suggests that :the disadvantaged students who are behind at the beginning of school, or who learn at a slower rate, will likely show a 'progressive retardation' as they continue in school" (Reynolds; as cited in Waxman, 1992, p. 4). Studies particular to Native students found similar patterns. Hamilton's (1991) research in New Brunswick found that

> students entering school [were] somewhat below strength, in general, and then proceeded to slip backwards, especially from Grade IV onward. This trend is paralleled at the upper elementary level by growing absenteeism and tension with teachers; at the junior high level by a failure and grade repetition rate roughly twice that on non-Indian students; and at the senior high level by the election of practical (as opposed to academic) programs, poor grades, slow progress, and an abnormally high rate of dropout. (p. 71)

Hamilton (1991) also stated that "the most troubling part of the picture is that which shows Indian students barely represented in the top echelon of academic performers at any level" (p. 71).

A possible reason for this lies in teacher expectations. Waxman et al. (1992) observed that "one of our greatest educational problems is that we often teach at-risk or disadvantaged students less than they are capable of learning. . . . This occurs when teachers interact with or treat low-achieving or special-needs students differently" (p. 5). Examples of this are when "teachers only call on at-risk students to answer low-level knowledge questions or when teachers wait less time for low-achieving students to answer questions" (p. 5). Another explanation assigns some of the problem to the

mainstream curriculum: "At about grade four, much that happens in public school focuses on identity formation and social functioning within the mainstream culture" (Coggins et al., 1997, p. 2). This can contribute to a low self-image and loss of culture for those students who are not part of the mainstream culture.

Learning and Teaching Styles

Teachers in this research study reported that despite many students experiencing destructive social and personal environments, students have demonstrated that they are capable, and in many cases very bright learners. However, there is a lack of a consistent positive school performance. Some participants commented on learning and instructional dynamics. For example, participants pointed to a lack of motivation due to the cumulative effect of being unsuccessful in learning for numerous years. Students simply stop trying when they get too far behind or do not have the conceptual base or learned skills to master the task.

A few participants claimed that the lack of consistency in Native student achievement is due to a mismatch between teaching and learning styles. These participants referred to a dominant Native learning style. More (1987) explained that *learning style* refers to the preferred or usual strategies or characteristics by which a person achieves knowledge, skills, and understanding. An example of these approaches is the global and analytic cognitive continuum. "Global processing emphasizes the whole and the relationship between its parts; analytic processing emphasizes processing individual parts and gradually building the whole in a careful sequential way" (p. 2). More claimed that there are serious mismatches between learning styles of Indian students and modern teaching approaches. Traditional and modern Native culture use global or simultaneous cognitive processing. The usual teaching style of beginning reading processes are usually sequential and have a strong phonetic approach. Other learning style traits, according to More, include impulsive/reflective, which is the speed of response to a question and the corresponding error rate; trial-and-error-/watch-then-do and think-then-do; field dependence/field independence, which is the degree to which a person can separate a figure from its background, whole or environment or the ability to impose organizational structure on a disorganized set of facts; and concrete/abstract,

which is processing information directly on the basis of the senses or through nonsensual processing.

Some participants in this research study commented that when school sports are emphasized there is a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Perhaps athletics was providing students with the opportunity to successfully utilize other learning styles. The resulting satisfaction and increase in self-esteem could have a positive transfer to academics. Research and classroom experience seems to indicate that, generally, Native students are global, reflective, watch-then-do, field independent, and concrete learning style orientated. Traditionally, these strategies have been an important part of Native learning and survival. Examples of cultural circumstances that utilize these styles are high levels of complex imagery in storytelling and legends (global), patience and lower error rates (reflective), observing or listening as a method of careful learning (watch-then-do), placing sensible order on unmapped territory (field independent; More, 1987, p. 4). There are places in the mainstream school curriculum where these skills are emphasized. However, it is not dominant or frequent enough to meet Native students' learning needs without additional and special consideration by the teacher.

Some participants insisted that Native students are capable of learning in the short term but "don't retain knowledge in the long term." The problem may be in the school's limited understanding of pedagogy. Mainstream school research recognizes that "not all people have the same interests and abilities; not all of us learn in the same way, . . . and that nowadays no one person can learn everything there is to learn" (Gardner, 1993, p. 10). According to Gardner, schools would be wise to broaden their understanding of intelligence and program delivery to include a perspective on multiple intelligence. Native schools are particularly well suited to this concept. Gardner identified seven intelligences and defined *intelligence* as multiple and having the "ability to solve, problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community" (p. 15). He commented that "it is the utmost importance that we recognize and nurture all of the varied human intelligence, and all of the combinations of intelligences" (p. 12). Schools have traditionally emphasized the logical mathematical intelligence at the expense of other areas of the intelligence spectrum. The seven areas identified by Gardner are linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-

kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. Of particular interest to Native people is Gardner's most recent category of intelligence (making eight). This is naturalist intelligence, found in people who have the ability to be closely connected to the natural world of plants and animals, geography, and natural objects, and who love to be outdoors, demonstrating a keen understanding and appreciation for the environment (Silver, 2000).

More (1987) recommended that through a basic understanding of learning styles and systematic teacher observations of students' learning, teachers can get to know each of their students' preferred learning styles. Then teachers should (a) match teaching style to learning style, (b) improve weaker learning styles, and (c) teach students how to be self-selecting with learning styles. More suggested that students develop intuitive skills by becoming skilled in a variety of supportive learning styles.

Phillips (as cited in Swisher, 1990) referred to four ways that teachers elicit student interaction with the teacher and request demonstrations of their learning: whole-class interaction with the teacher, small-group interaction with the teacher, one-to-one involvement between the teacher and a single student, and student-led groups supervised by the teacher. This is known as the *interactionary* style. These are all influenced by the educator's "teaching style, which refers to the teacher's pervasive personal behaviours and media used during interaction with learners; it is the teacher's characteristic approach, whatever the method used" (Bennett, as cited in Swisher, 1994, p. 10). According to Phillips (as cited in Swisher, 1994), Native children, in contrast with Anglo children, were "reluctant to participate in the whole class and small group interactions; however, they were more talkative than Anglo children in the context of student-initiated verbal interaction and student-led group projects" (p. 2). If the student is competing with others to achieve a common goal that benefits a number of individuals, then the Native student is likely to participate well. Contemporary teaching methodologies that emphasize this approach do exist; for example, cooperative learning strategies utilizing student teams to accomplish learning goals as organized by the classroom teacher.

The schools involved in this research study had only a few Aboriginal teachers. It is likely that in the near future the dominance of non-Native teachers in the classroom will continue. These teachers may still be successful if they understand and practice a few pivotal Aboriginal-sensitive values. In research on Native students, Couture (1987) found

that they will apply themselves for a teacher who "treats them well, supports them, and especially for one who does not yell or display anger" (p. 78). He also found that when teachers did not teach in these ways, "the students indicated an aversion to school and a lack of desire to cooperate with the teacher" (p. 78). Erikson (as cited in Deyhle & Swisher, 1997) contended that "it may be that culturally congruent instruction depoliticizes cultural differences in the classroom, and that such depoliticization has important positive influences on the teacher-student relationship. Such a situation in the classroom might prevent the emergence of student resistance" (p. 164).

The classroom teacher cannot always accommodate learning styles, interactional styles, and curriculum relevancy to suit all learners. An important need identified by some participants in this research study was the development of students' knowledge and skills related to the world outside of the reserve communities. Although supporting the need for relevancy, Wehlage et al. (1989) felt that every lesson does not need to be explicitly relevant to students. "Educators can ask students to suspend judgment about the 'relevance' of certain knowledge, but the persistent separation of school learning from learning as it occurs in the world outside of school is maintained at the cost disengagement" (p. 183).

A number of participants felt that Native student standards and curriculum content should be as high in expectations as anywhere else in the province. With this in mind, a caution about learning styles came from Watt-Cloutier et al. (1991):

> Academic standards and rigour have been lowered in the name of respect for the "different learning styles" of Aboriginal peoples. Certainly there are cultural differences and value systems that must be respected at every level. However, these kinds of generalizations must be used with caution. What follows the lowering of standards is the lowering of expectations of all involved, including students, teachers, and parents. (pp. 115-116)

Resilience Approach

As mentioned before, many participants in this research study felt that student conduct is a major issue. To most of those interviewed, the issue of poor school performance is rooted in unfocussed, apathetic, or inappropriate student behaviour. For years the mainstream education system has referred to those students who struggle to

succeed socially and academically as "at-risk" students. However, more recent programs for these students have replaced this with a more positive emphasis. Such programs foster individual student competence and resilience. "Competence is referred to as patterns of effective pro-social adaption while resilience is most commonly defined as the manifestation of competence in the face of hardship" (Miller, 1998, p. 365). It is believed that positive choices are made by individuals who either have competence or are able to elicit adaptive or compensatory strategies.

Participants in this research study pointed out that many of their students live in what education considers unsupportive and high-risk environments. Even Native participants recognized that there are students performing poorly who are living in dysfunctional homes. However, growing up in such conditions is not unique to Native people. Resiliency researchers have done longitudinal studies that show that

> between half and two thirds of children growing up in families with mentally ill, alcoholic, abusive, or criminally involved parents or in poverty-stricken or war torn communities do overcome the odds and turn a life trajectory of risk into one that manifests "resilience," the term used to describe a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaption and transformation despite risk and adversity. (Benard, 1995, p. 1)

Ruth Smith (as cited in Henderson & Milstein, 1998), stated that what we need is "an awareness of the self-righting tendencies that move children toward normal adult development under all but the most adverse circumstances" (p. 17). Given that these competencies can exist and develop, the role of the school and families is to identify the existing strengths within a student and use these to compensate for deficits within him/herself, the home or social environment, or even the school itself. The task is also to help the student develop and learn the strategies that support the development of a resilient person. The nature and number of these strategies may vary with individuals and the issues. A few traits have genetic roots (such as an outgoing social personality), but most of them are capable of being learned and can thus be promoted (Henderson & Milstein, 1998). Crucial to the resiliency process are protective factors within the individual or the environment that reduce the negative impact of stressful situations and problems (Henderson & Milstein).

The characteristics within an individual that foster resiliency are very similar to the list of attributes that the participants in this research study listed as belonging to the students who succeeded academically. The personal traits that foster resiliency are as follows:

> gives of self in service to others and/or a cause; uses life skills, including good decision making, assertiveness, impulse control, and problem solving; sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships; sense of humor; internal locus of control; perceptiveness; autonomy/independence; positive view of personal future; flexibility; capacity for and connection to learning; self-motivation; is "good at something"/personal competence; feelings of self-worth and self-confidence; and personal faith in something greater–spirituality. (Henderson & Milstein, 1998, p. 17)

The characteristics of a family, community and school that fosters resiliency are admirable. These are listed below:

> promotes close bonds; values and encourages education; uses high-warmth/low-criticism style of interaction; sets and enforces clear boundaries (rules, norms, and laws); encourages supportive relationships with many caring others; promotes sharing of responsibilities, service to others, "required helpfulness"; provide access to resources for basic needs of housing, employment, health care, and recreation; expresses high, realistic expectations for success; encourages goal-setting and mastery; encourages pro-social development of values (like (altruism) and life skills (like cooperation); provides leadership, decision making, and other opportunities for meaningful participation; appreciates the unique talents of each individual. (Henderson & Milstein, 1998, p. 17)

Nichter (as cited in Warry, 1998) suggested that communities be seen in terms of "positive deviance, that is, how positive behavior can help to reshape communities where dysfunctional behavior has become normalized" (p. 225).

Programming to Student Needs

Teachers in this research study felt that many of their students performance on the Alberta achievement test were well below their classroom-demonstrated skill level. They felt that this underachievement may have been due to student anxiety, a poor curriculum-test match , uncertainty with test format, lack of effort, and improper mechanics. In addition, the public results indicate whether the students are reaching an acceptable or unacceptable level. When the majority of students are at the unacceptable level, this leads

one to a disturbing conclusion and perhaps a feeling of despair and helplessness. Teachers in this research study felt that their classroom experience indicated that many students were just a grade behind, and some simply just lacked test-taking skills. Specific programming could go a long way to correct these shortcomings.

If the communities were aware that many students are close to the acceptable level and/or that there are particular strengths and weaknesses that can be programmed for, they might not be as upset as when the dismal results are reported without these qualifications. They may also be motivated to make adjustments so that their children can improve. The circumstance would not be seen as desperate for many, and those doing their best would get a perspective on their success.

Identifying and concentrating on specific academic weaknesses makes sense when one considers that studies consistently identify similar needs. Mackay and Myles (1989) found that poor English-language skills persisted through to high school. They suggested that Native high school dropouts are frustrated by low levels of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills and considered that this may be related to inadequate learning in elementary school, parents' lack of education, a lack of reading activity and materials and encouragement at home, the dominance of television as a recreational activity, inadequate or nonexistent library facilities in home communities, and the use of a community dialect of English. Mackay and Myles further commented that for some students English is a second language, but this is not recognized and programmed for to the extent that is done for new immigrants. They also felt that discomforts with English may lead to avoidance behaviour such as not speaking up in class, failing to ask questions when unclear, or not expressing needs.

Some teachers in this research study were concerned that the Alberta achievement testing process was not consistent with what the department is promoting as current best educational practices. For example, an integrated subject-theme approach, portfolio creation and assessment, whole language, and language experience are all encouraged. Teachers claimed that they tried to compensate for these discrepancies. These efforts included ensuring that teaching closely matches curriculum and the test matches the curriculum, allowing for similar test practice sessions using a variety of test formats regularly, teaching the students test-taking strategies (reading carefully, order of

answering, smart guessing, first instinct, wise use of time, checking, multiple choice, essay, and graphs and chart answering strategies), motivating, modeling, enthusiasm, discussing rationale for test, and rewarding test-taking efforts.

Many participants felt that the test measured only test-taking skills directly and everything else indirectly or not at all. Approaches such as authentic evaluation were thought to be a more accurate and direct measure of student understanding and skill. Also known as performance assessment, alternative assessment, or direct assessment, authentic evaluations include a variety of techniques such as written products, portfolios, check lists, teacher observations, and group projects. Supporters of these types of tests note that all forms of authentic assessment can be summarized numerically or put on a scale to make it possible to combine individual results and meet provincial requirements for comparable quantitative data.

The participants in this research study compromised the effectiveness of the test by not making full use of its post-assessment potential. Educators were very weak on informing parents about the test and its purposes, as well as on sharing results. Strategies for post-test efforts that were not consistent (sometimes absent entirely) include discussing strengths and weaknesses with everyone, including students and parents; using the test diagnostically for programming; reporting the results to all school staff; ensuring that the appropriate programming and instruction adjustments are conducted with all teachers in the school; and adjusting multiyear and year plans as required.

One of the interviewees of this research study suggested that there be a validity check with regard to the Native reserve students and the Alberta achievement test. Critics of standardized testing feel that such tests are flawed and even harmful for Native students because they are truly only measures of one's knowledge of the mainstream culture and school process. It is suggested that any assessment be based on local contexts and experiences, have culturally relevant content, and use a variety of methods.

A related issue may be that some testing problems experienced by minority children appear to link to their lack of understanding or lack of acceptance of tests as devices for judging personal success or failure in the classroom. In a study with Navajo college graduates who came from homes of low income and low education, Rindone (1988) found that most participants felt that parents and family members were the most

important motivating factor in their educational success. This was identified even more often than personal motivation.

School and Community Relationships

The majority of the participants in this research study commented that extensive barriers exist between the school and the community. The result is very limited teacher interaction with the community. However, most educators felt that the school was welcoming. From a mainstream Canadian school perspective, the schools in this research study did the usual parent/community activities, but the formula was not successful in these Native communities. It was reported that few parents attend parent interviews, messages went unanswered, and teachers rarely saw parents for any reason.

A lack of parental support was repeatedly brought to my attention. Mackay and Myles (1989) found that Native parents were either uninterested in school or did not appreciate the value of education, were uncomfortable with school/parent meetings and therefore did not attend, and did not understand or were suspicious of schools. They also found that a multitude of social problems interfered with parental ability to support education. In addition, there may be a philosophical belief that the decision to go to school belongs to the student, and there is a fear of losing their children if they succeed in school.

Before questioning the value that parents place on education, the school experiences of these parents and how this may affect how they see their children relating to the school circumstance should be considered. Morrisseau (1998), a Native, shared his related experience:

> School was supposed to be a place of learning, growth, and development, but for me it only presented a different set of problems. The only similarity between home and school was the feeling of anger it generated because I was not as good as the other kids. My clothes usually had patches, my lunch consisted of mustard sandwiches, and my body usually was dirty. Being called a 'dirty Indian' brought forth anger and hatred for the system that was supposed to teach me. Because of this, I never really developed a commitment to education. (p. 64)

Participants in this study identified a lack of daily readiness for learning as a major reason for poor school performance. Mackay and Myles (1989) identified some barriers to learning readiness. They reported that with those he surveyed, poor attendance

was clearly associated with dropping out. Reasons for poor attendance included that school was boring and irrelevant to their lives, being with friends was more satisfying, disliked teachers were avoided, homework was incomplete , some students were too shy to make presentations, there were problems and responsibilities at home, and students failed to get up on time and missed the bus. Absenteeism also existed for students who did well in school. In any case, the accumulation of problems such as failed assignments and loss of learning eventually created insurmountable problems. This continued absence or pattern of absenteeism eventually resulted in the loss of concern, support, and respect of teachers and counsellors.

Communication

In this research study the movement of children between communities was greater in schools close to urban centres. However, all communities had teachers who felt that some students moved within their own communities a great deal. The teachers commented that contacting parents to discuss student performance, behaviour, or health was often difficult. They reported that there were often no phones in the homes and that they did not know where some students lived because they seemed to be at a different house every night. The participants saw this as a significant problem and a questionable practice. However, it is possible that from a community point of view, most, if not all, of these students may be safely cared for and can be located quickly. The schools need to understand the extended-family concept in each community and what it means for each student. It is likely as simple as establishing who the primary guardians are, and then asking them with whom they leave their children when necessary (secondary guardians). Messages left with key individuals might also be effective. Once school needs regarding safety, health, and academic and behavioural reporting to parents are explained, then a reasonable process might be developed. On the other hand, if this process reveals children not well cared for, then appropriate measures may be initiated. Schools need to consider that

> the structure of the American Indian family network is radically different from other extended family units in Western society. The traditional European family network on which most traditional American families are patterned is limited to three generations within a single household. American Indian family networks, however, are more structurally open. The extended family of American Indians

> includes several households representing significant relevant relatives along both vertical and horizontal lines, thus assuming village-type characteristics. (Redhorse, Lewis, Feit, & Decker, 1978; as cited in Light & Martin, 1996, p. 1)

Most of the participants in this research study felt that there was greater parent involvement with the younger students. Pianta and Walsh (1996) commented that

> children begin a relationship with schooling before they attend formal schools or preschools. They learn about schooling from siblings and neighbours. Their parents are busy preparing them in better and worse ways, or struggling to discover how to prepare them for the many classroom years ahead. (Graue; as cited in Pianta & Walsh, p. 29)

Schools may mistakenly believe that when there is a lack of parent involvement, there is no relationship. However, it may actually mean that the relationship is negative.

At least one participant of this research study thought that Aboriginal educational programs require strengthening at the kindergarten level. The interviewee was frustrated with what he perceived as a lack of attention in this area and felt that the effects of this neglect were visible through at least the critical early years of schooling. According to Bornestein (as cited in Pianta & Walsh, 1996), the early school years are a sensitive period for developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes critical for school success: "As a sensitive period the early years take on unique importance in establishing the developmental infrastructure on which later experiences will build on" (p. 29). Therefore, minor adjustments in the early years of school can have major effects on the future path through school and life (Pianta & Walsh). Slavin (as cited in Miller, 1998) stated that research has shown that by the time students are in third grade, it can be predicted which students are likely to drop out of school.

It has been noted that success in school is significantly affected by school and family relations. Pianta and Walsh (1996) suggested a model for school and family interaction. This model intends to improve the views of many educators who singularly attribute failure to faults associated with the school, child, or family and their backgrounds. These views were held by a number of this research study's participants. Some participants' views were similar to that explained by the disadvantage model. This explanation places the reason for inadequacy with the child's home. An example of these inadequacies would be those arising through poverty and poor parenting skills. Another

academic theory shared by participants was the cultural difference model, which places the blame for educational shortcomings on the school. With the cultural difference model children were no longer seen as coming to school "broken," but as different. Students' being "broken" was the term used by one participant. In the cultural differences model "children come to school from nondominant cultures that are different from the dominant culture of the school" (p. 43). This difference results in frequent misunderstandings, and the students are often perceived as being less capable than their peers from the dominant culture, for whom school is very familiar. Therefore, according to this view, schools need to be more culturally responsive to the students (Pianta & Walsh).

In the Native reserve setting, Native students are in the majority culture. However, they are not in the dominant school culture in the instructional and decision-making context. In this research study, participants referred to school and student cultural differences as an issue. However, Pianta and Walsh (1996) felt that "if children are not communicating well in school, there is more going on than simple discontinuity of the type present in the cultural difference model" (p. 44). The approach that Pianta and Walsh suggested is one that

> locates the problem not in the child, the home, or the school, but in the relationships between child and family, and schooling, and the other individuals and institutions involved in schooling. Problems cannot be placed in some static location. Rather they are distributed across and among ever-changing contexts. They exist in constantly changing between-spaces. The relationships we seek to describe, understand, and ultimately work with are not just between school and family or between teacher and child, or child and parents, they are between dynamic patterns of interaction involving all these agents and actors. (p. 54)

The emphasis is on relationships, dialogue, and clear and consistent communication. The inadequacies are not in the child, school, or family, but in the lack of "conversation" (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). The term *conversation* places the traditionally power-centred school in an equal partnership with the other stakeholders. By nature, conversations are not one sided, but rather are open ended and continuous. Conversations are give and take; all parties receive equal attention. These elements of school, student, and family relationships are missing in Native reserve schools. In fact, according to a study by Contreras (1997), Native students "of all academic abilities admitted

experiencing difficulty communicating with their teachers. . . . Some students stated that they had to repeat themselves over and over until the non-Native teacher gets it" (p. 55).

Brownell and Walter-Thomas (1997) have noted that in their cross-cultural experience they have "never seen an instance where family-school relationships did not improve when school personnel approached families with an ethic of care. Further, when teachers have relationships with families they see the students in a different light" (p. 122). Brownell and Walter-Thomas stated that "a good starting place is going to community events. When we demonstrate genuine care, relationships between families and schools will change" (p. 122).

Positive attitudes towards reaching out and being part of the community were evident in the answers of only a few participants in this research study. In some cases the teachers were open to the idea of community involvement, but seemed to expect it to happen to them, rather than actively seeking it out. Using the achievement test results as an example, this study reveals that there is a general weakness in communication between the school staff and community.

In every community reviewed it seemed that communication between the community and school was a difficult matter. It was layered in accurate and inaccurate perceptions held by both school staff and the community. Teachers generally had perceptions that they were not welcome in parents' homes; very few said that they had done home visits. This perception of "unwelcomeness" resulted in the schools and teachers isolating themselves from the community and parents. A lack of interaction is a significant and fundamental problem for school and community development, and therefore student achievement. Mackay and Myles' (1989) research with Native students studying in high schools off the reserve found home and school communication problems because of parents living in other communities, a lack of telephones in homes, students not delivering school letters, and schools contacting the home only in negative circumstances. When communication was conducted, it proceeded in a unidirectional way. They also found that there was little basis for mutual trust and understanding and that both the school and Native parents seemed reluctant to communicate.

Reserve schools in this research study appeared to have similar problems to those outlined by Mackay and Myles (1989). This is unfortunate, because a study by Rindone

(1988) identified Navajo parents and family members as the primary motivators for their children to realize high educational attainment as college graduates. She also commented that the mainstream educational assumption that a "low income and low educational level of parents perpetuate low educational aspirations for their children does not hold true with Native families" (p. 1). Rindone added that "these findings indicate that the family is the key to academic success of these high achieving Navajos" (p. 6).

One teacher in this research study, who was administering the tests for the first time, suggested that his intention was to convey to parents their children's results and academic standing clearly and honestly. He was planning to deliver the achievement test results to the parents and have a teacher/parent meeting. When asked whether he felt comfortable going to parents' homes, he stated that he was comfortable with this and had visited most of his student's homes. He had also gained relationships and reputation by joining the community hockey team. However, the majority of those interviewed had not visited very many, if any, homes and had previously simply announced to the community that they had the results and that they could be reviewed on a specific night. Few parents, and sometimes none, came to these meetings. However, some schools have made presentations to the community band counsellors. It would be useful to research how effective these presentations were and in what manner presentations should be carried out to ensure effectiveness.

The effect of poor communication is the absence or the restriction of school and community interactions. This significantly handicaps both parents and educators. Parents lose information on their children's progress or have an excuse for denying knowledge of any problems, which allows the family to avoid dealing with the issue. This prevents the analysis of any family, personal, or community problems that may be contributing. Therefore, by not initiating and pursuing a two-way dialogue, the school is enabling any existing community and parent denial processes and problems. Parents who do not receive complaints from the school, when their child is behaving poorly at home, may believe that they as parents are inadequate and that the school professionals are superior. This could undermine the parents' faith in their own abilities and therefore add to personal issues and lower their interest in parenting effectively. In my experience, in the

majority of cases both caregivers are having the same problems with the same child. Therefore, there is a need to complement each other's strategies and efforts.

School and Community Avoidance

The interactions between educators and families of this research study left many gaps in what is in essence honest communication. In many of the reserve schools historical issues, cross-cultural differences, fears, and communication problems have resulted in educators being hesitant to share negative information. The community parents have similar reasons to be hesitant about approaching the school. However, both positions are unfortunate and stand in the way of community development, healing and personal growth, and understanding. According to Ross (1992), one difficult task for those helping communities to heal and move forward is convincing them that silence is contradictory to the healing process. A similar view shared by a participant was that the school is enabling the community's problems by not having a high standard.

Despite the basic integrity of the schools and individuals involved in this study, they must accept responsibility for communication failure that has resulted from school staff not being persistent, adaptive, or innovative in their efforts to dialogue with the parents and community. An educator (not part of this research study) once told me, "I did not want to approach them [Native parents] about their child's school problems. They have so many of their own problems. I did not want to give them any more." The findings of this dissertation also indicate that few teachers had visited their students' homes, met the parents, or knew anything about the reserve life or organization. Schools involved in this research study are mistakenly being less than open with parents and the community about the reality of classroom dysfunctions and failings. The effect of this is to convince parents that the status quo is fine. In the communities studied in this thesis the opposite is true. Perhaps if the parents were more involved in the impact of their problems on their children, they would be motivated to change.

It can be very convenient for both the school, family, and community to silently develop and maintain an absence of dialogue. Effectively, each party acts as an enabler to the problems or failings of the other. This can be seen as a process of mutual enabling between the school and the parents. Without regular and open community and parent communication, the school is operating, planning, and making decisions blindly in this

cross-cultural setting. It may also be very convenient for a school and its staff to avoid spending the time required to establish meaningful dialogue partnerships with individual parents, community organizations, and leaders. Avoiding dialogue means that they will not need to adapt, reprogram, or in any way deal with criticisms, community expectations, and constructive feedback requiring change.

Interviewees of this research study were frustrated that they could not understand the concerns, issues, or logical connections of concerns brought up by parents. Just as the school is frustrated with issues that hinder their efforts, the community may also have its own concerns and be frustrated with the school's inability to understand their point of view. In my experience, if the school is not meeting the expectations of Aboriginal parents, the message from the parents may come from indirect and from a non-Native viewpoint in subtle ways. It also appears to be in ambiguous forms (e.g., seemingly unimportant complaints about teacher lateness or unclear unfairness to students). In such cases, the community may be trying to dialogue, but either the communication styles are different or they do not perceive that the communication channels are open or available in a way in which they can relate comfortably. The parents end up trying to represent their children in the only ways that they are empowered to do so, with general or even obscure complaints.

The Healing Process

In this research study the participants frequently referred to their community having "healing" workshops. These and other community events were respected by those interviewed, but also resented for taking the students out of school for a few days at a time. The researcher inquired about the school's participation in these events. The idea of the school's offering to be part of these events seemed to go unappreciated by the interviewees. The non-Native school staff assumed that any school participation would be intrusive, taboo, insensitive, or simply perceived as unwelcome. This may not be the community's position; it may be the opposite. However, if this is the community's view, then the school would be wise to respectfully approach the organizers about opportunities for involvement in this important community process. The healing programs should be extremely important to the schools. Some interviewees in this research study felt that the violence they see in school may be because of students copying experiences seen in their

home. Children may also be driven by a personal inner anger because of personal confusions and family abuse or abandonment.

Judging from the lack of school and parent partnerships and the poor communication that exists in all communities involved in this research study, it would seem that school and community problems and likely resentments exist. If community healing workshops are a community priority, school staff would be well served by spending professional development time with people knowledgeable on community and personal healing models and the basics of personal addictions and abuse healing. This is not to expand their roles, but to provide common ground. This also allows the school to consider whether it is unintentionally part of the enabling process and how it might support community and personal progress through regular functions.

It would be beneficial to everyone if a portion of the community healing workshops could be dedicated to dialogue and the development of partnerships between school staff and community people. Alternatively, the school could initiate community partnership meetings, which could be held in community-favoured sites. This would be a nonthreatening, community-centred process. Attendance at the healing workshop would provide the school with meaningful information on community efforts to improve, and the community may have healing issues related to the school (such as residential schools, curriculum issues, culture, religion). Open dialogue can be difficult, but it is the only way to move forward in the issues frustrating Native educators and parents and the community as a whole. However, Morrisseau (1998) cautioned, "Aboriginal people appreciate that our communities need to be involved in the healing process. Yet there are many who do not understand the traditional ways, nor do they understand what it means to be Aboriginal" (p. 79). In my cross-cultural experiences, sincerity, honesty, and good intentions can bridge many gaps. This is especially true when children and youth are the purpose of the dialogue.

The dynamics of school and community communication operate within the larger societal and historical context. According to Neal (1990), when a minority is being acculturated to the culture of the dominant group, there are psychological consequences. Part of this is the emotional shock of being acculturated. The result of this can include the rejection of quality of life standards. In addition, the emotional advantage of being the

enculturer has been seen to "foster sadism and chauvinism" (p. 237). For many Aboriginal people, families, and students the ideal Aboriginal culture and values have been replaced by an emotional power struggle that can manifest itself in "unteachability, addiction, violence, violent chauvinism and cynical dishonesty" (p. 237). Moreover, the dominance and dependency cycle of acculturation has self-fulfilling false myths. Therefore the cycle of dependency can only be broken when these are deconstructed through dialogue between those involved (Neal).

Dialogue that coordinates the goals and needs of the school and community also protects and serves the students. All schools are institutions of achievement and expected social compliance; therefore, they reinforce the desire for certain accepted behaviour norms and values. This is true despite cultural differences. One strategy used by students experimenting with extreme behaviours is to "disconnect" from all authorities of their world (school, parent, etc.). They behave in extreme ways that result in school and parent authorities severing ties with them. They are then free to make unacceptable choices, such as using drugs or alcohol, not going home for days, and not being responsible for anything or to anyone. In fact, the disconnected existence allows them to justify their unacceptable choices, such as drug use, noncompliance, and not working in school (Murray, 2001).

Management and Leadership

In this research study the participants identified issues that involve the roles of band leaders and their managers. Despite living in relatively small communities, the participants in this research study were significantly distant from the community leaders. Participants held beliefs about what they thought the band leaders expected and believed; however, no participant was able to provide an example of when the leaders and teaching staff had planned together or even met with a common purpose. For example, some commented that the band leaders' yearly expectations for academic success were unrealistic. However, no explanation of the basis for this was provided when I probed.

Individual band leaders are as likely as any community member to have issues with the school and the education process, as well as feeling personal cultural tensions for contemporary and historical reasons. For this reason, school dialogues with these particular individuals and councils are critical. In a broader sense Dawson (1995; as cited

in Warry, 1998), has suggested that "healing the healers is critical because staff, councillors, and other leaders can be key agents of change, and role models for children and youth" (p. 158). Warry pointed out that, according to front-line workers, it is impossible for communities to heal unless key individuals are healthy or have healed themselves.

The confidence and competencies that arise from personal healing will allow community leaders to organize and administer education in ways that are uniquely appropriate to each Native community. This different management of reserve schools is important. Alfred (1999) asked, "What does it matter if the reserve is run by Indians, so long as they behave like bureaucrats and carry out the same old policies? Redefined and reworded, the 'new' relationship still abuses indigenous people" (p. xiii). He added, "Indigenous government must have meaningful indigenous character" (p. xiv).

Community Vision for Success

In the larger community sense, the participants in this research study felt that the communities had no vision for success. Morrisseau (1998) stressed the need for Native community visions and identity: "Much of our self-worth and identity comes to us through our identification with our communities. As our communities heal and change, so will their value systems" (p. 79). Given the communication problems between the schools and their communities, it is possible that the visions exist and that the schools are not aware. It at least seems certain that the schools and teachers in this research study are unaware of their role or potential role in the execution of this plan.

Mackay and Myles (1989) in their study of Native high school dropouts reported that dropouts demonstrated little planning for the future in any area, had difficulty relating the short-term task of course work to the goal of graduating, and believed that there was a lack of employment opportunities. Therefore, for many there was little incentive to graduate. They felt that they had little need for schooling other than for its social aspects. In contrast, non-Natives decide on career possibilities at an early age. It should be noted that the concept of success is culturally framed. The Native definition of success may differ from that of the school. School systems claim to respect and foster individuality and creativity and to accept differing views within their system. However,

the reality is that this is only as far as the collective personal boundaries of the staff tolerate.

Presentation of School Results

According to the participants in this research study, few community parents or leaders visit or get involved with the school. This creates the problem that the community leaders and parents do not have authentic knowledge about their children's learning environment. They also do not receive or avoid, or, for other reasons, are unaware of the most basic individual and schoolwide student participation and achievement information. Positive student achievement information may reinforce the motivated or competent parents' effective-parenting efforts. Negative information provided to reluctant school partners or to parents with low and dysfunctional skills may help them become motivated to adjust their efforts and lifestyle.

Teachers in this study strongly felt that the presentation of results without some kind of learning environment, progress, participation rate, and learning readiness context made it look like they were not doing their job. Perhaps schools could explain the results in terms of an authentic class and individual student profile. This could include school career attendance, current attendance/lateness, discipline, the class learning environment (positive and negative), and previous results and progress rates. This is likely a critical point in terms of clear communication and honesty, as well as authentic and purposeful community development.

The participants in this research study thought that educators, parents, and community leaders could benefit by knowing the general Alberta achievement test results of other Native schools. This should come as a report for all Native schools. The rationale behind this is to be able to see where other schools were successful, and then professionally share and exchange ideas and approaches that have worked. Common failings could also be identified, and interschool work groups could be established to generate solutions. If this is not possible for every school (confidentiality, etc.), then the top five schools could be identified with permission.

For many of the educators in this research study, the problems persist simply because of the attendance attitudes of community parents. Yet general school attendance has increased, according to participants who had been in the community for a long time.

This research study did not review the school attendance of the communities involved. However, nationally, the proportion of on-reserve students remaining in school until Grade 12 increased from about 3% in 1960/61 to a rate of 75% in 1995/96 (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996). In fact, the schooling and well-being of the community children have been reported as important values for many parents (Government of Canada, 1996).

Without question, school attendance in Native communities has improved dramatically. Parents, students, and schools should be proud and commended for this achievement. However, after further analysis, the Native reserve attendance rate of 75% can be seen as giving parents and leaders false confidence. For example, even if this number were higher, at 85%, this attendance rate is still insufficient. It represents a high score on a test or assignment, but viewing attendance percentages in this way is misleading. In provincial schools the average attendance rate is likely to be closer to 95%. The difference in practical terms can be demonstrated by considering that the student attending 85% of the time is absent almost one day a week (or 3-4 days a month), whereas the 95% student is absent one day a month. Over the year, this provincial school percentage represents 10 missed days, whereas the reserve percentage, even at 85%, would represent 30 days a year. At 75% the difference is even more dramatic. When one considers the progressive nature of school subjects such as language arts and mathematics, absence can have serious consequences. If a child is significantly and consistently absent from the new content portion, he or she might not learn anything new that year. Participants also referred to the impact of low and/or irregular attendance on the individual student and his/her classmates; these include significant amounts of extra teacher time spent on reteaching, refocusing, and getting absent students back into school routines.

If Native parents, students, and schools desire results similar to those obtained by provincial school students, then they should consider whether their children's attendance and preparation levels are similar. It should also be noted that a few participants in this research study felt that a student's positive attendance can be partially or fully negated by school circumstances such as teaching approaches, the behaviour of other students, and curriculum that has no relevance to the student.

In this research study some of the families had relatives living in nearby communities or were within driving distance of another school. Some parents moved their children from school to school. According to participants, this usually resulted in a fragmented education process. Sometimes changing schools was done with genuine concern, and other times to avoid school discipline, according to participants. A fragmented school process is likely to lead to a compromised education. To obtain competency in a subject area, most students need to be at the same school consistently.

Community-Based School Plans and Standards

In the schools involved in this research study there was a lack of a coordinated effort to communicate and process Alberta achievement test results. These were seldom used for programming, and even within a school, sharing of these was inconsistent. This is a significant loss of the classroom diagnostic value of the test, and the opportunity for related class and schoolwide follow-up programming. The lack of planning may also create a schoolwide attitude that tests results are the responsibility of only the current teacher. This was specifically mentioned. Some teachers surveyed suggested that tests should be seen in the context of the students' entire school career (discussed above). Multigrade programming should be conducted by all teachers immediately after test results are received and should be revised and adjusted each year. This kind of collaborative analysis might also identify consistent community/school concerns or weaknesses that could be programmed for in a uniform or coordinated manner.

In my opinion, the open-ended questions and my probing showed that the majority of those surveyed were not good at brainstorming action-orientated ideas for their specific Native community setting. This weakness may be because many participants were relatively inexperienced teachers, participants were not familiar enough with community circumstances, participants were inexperienced in doing this kind of activity, or they were in need of a different lead-up activity. In any event, this might be an issue for schools to explore. Can the staff create effective and meaningful community-based action plans? Are those plans that do exist based on community values and ways of doing things? What processes would help? If the schools looked at the community's needs first, they would likely find roles for themselves that are consistent with the mandates they would like to follow. This approach would also encourage school

and community partnerships and dialogue. According to Watt-Cloutier et al. (2000), there is a holistic relationship between all of the reserve community's needs, and each need supports and is supported by the others. The community has general needs of self-government, culture preservation and development, and community and regional infrastructure development. At the same time individuals have personal needs of self-management skills, heritage skills, global cultural access and analytical skills, and community and economic skills (Watt-Cloutier et al.). All of these are needs that can be holistically mixed with current school needs.

For authentic community-based school plans to be developed, the existing circumstances and careful planning need to be considered. This is the opportunity being missed in the schools involved in this research study. According to Rosenholtz (as cited in Schmoker, 1999), an organization's success is dependent on having clear and common goals. This clarified understanding accelerates communication and promotes persistence and collective purpose. Schmoker added that schools have launched many initiatives, but "the combination of three concepts constitutes the foundation for results: meaningful, informed teamwork; clear measurable goals; and the regular collection and analysis of performance data" (p. 2).. In this regard the band councils in the schools involved in this research study were wise in insisting that their schools take part in the Alberta provincial achievement tests. They established a method for tracking student achievement in significant areas. However, what is still required is a regular process that uses this data to set goals through a collaborative process involving all stakeholders. The school administration, parents, teachers, and students are the critical people in this process. However, sensitive direction, leadership, and coordinated involvement should come from the band council and its managers.

Once goals are established, then shared strategic planning can be developed as to how to reach these goals. Strategic planning is one of many terms that can be applied to a process of school analysis and proactive planning. Native schools can benefit greatly from such a process because school programs are often derived from the personalities present at any given time and therefore change with the transience of the staff. Multiyear planning and commitment allow for strong and effective programs to be developed and maintained as part of the fabric and culture of the school (Dogrib, 1993), thereby

resulting in "continuity, direction and purpose to sustain excellence" (p. 1). Integral to this process is community participation, research, and validation. This can be enhanced with techniques of group facilitation and group planning.

According to the planning process used by the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education (1993), the strategic planning process has six objectives: (a) assistance in bringing the community and the school closer together as staff and parents work cooperatively to plan educationally; (b) better coordination and support of activities by central administration; (c) development of clear, articulated goals with measurable objectives to guide actions; (d) enhancement of the integration at the planning and program levels; (e) assistance in providing continuity in community school programs in spite of staff changes; and (f) provision of a basis for program staff and principal evaluation.

Security and Appreciation

Planning and goal setting are critical, but fundamental to success is basic employee motivation, attitude, and commitment. Many of those teachers interviewed during this research study held the perception that they were not appreciated, because appreciation was seldom expressed. They felt that parents thought that they were in the community only for the money. They also believed that students were permitted to be verbally abusive with staff and that there was no job security. There is likely at least some element of cross-cultural confusion within this issue. There may also be persistent community anxieties related to historical events, practices, and personal school experiences. However, the community people may also have contemporary concerns that require addressing before they feel comfortable showing appreciation. This does not mean that appreciation does not exist, but, as in most cross-cultural matters, it may be layered in differences in communication and how appreciation is expressed. These matters can best be improved upon by open dialogue. The lack of dialogue allows issues to solidify and build incrementally until they seem too large or deeply rooted to address.

Teachers in this research study said that they had heard that the band councils would terminate and rehire teachers on the basis of Alberta achievement test results. However, no one had heard this message directly or from school or band management. The community leaders should meet with teachers and share their expectations, concerns,

and criteria for rehire. If the band considers the results on the achievement tests to be something for which the school is accountable, then the school has the opportunity to share ways in which the school requires support. Community discussions on how to support student achievement goals should be to the mutual advantage of schools and communities.

Staff appreciation feasts, cultural orientation days, spontaneous positive visits by band leaders, continued equal compensation, and a transparent financial compensation system would foster employee morale and security. A transparent system could be as simple as employees having the option of phoning the insuring companies to establish whether their coverage payments have been made (pension, medical, and other benefit plans) or quarterly reports that show that payments have been made. Another option would be to pay these in advance. Mechanisms that support these needs will go a long way to promote employee security and goodwill and to maintain professional and personal work ethics. It might also serve to reduce teacher turnover and attract more experienced staff. This is not to be interpreted as a lack of trust or faith by the employees, but rather as a sound employer practice to ensure goodwill and secure feelings amongst the staff. The need for such employee compensation security measures results from the fact that the bands are small businesses, not because they are a First Nations operation. Appreciation is also a sound strategy for any organization. Lortie (1999; as cited in Schmoker, 1999) commented that every school would be wise to use "concrete strategies to celebrate and recognize goal-orientated effort and achievement. Praise and public acknowledgment . . . is both confirming and reaffirming" (p. 112). Between the school administration and the band, there should be a conscious effort to "celebrate, recognize, reinforce, and reward" (p. 111).

It is not only Native school personnel who have been concerned about a lack of appreciation being offered by their school community. Goodlad (1983) also identified that "school personnel perceived themselves to be working in an atmosphere of criticism, declining confidence and support and little appreciation" (p. 167). This comment was published in 1983; however, it seems that little has changed.

Family and Community Issues

A frequent comment from the research participants was that many students experienced very difficult family circumstances at home. Certainly, interviewees felt that most homes were not consistent with what mainstream educators believe to be supportive of the school process. It was also noted that there are many students doing well despite the burden of having to overcome the consequences of extremely dysfunctional households. Those interviewees commenting on this did so with admiration for their students. They speculated that these students would likely be seen as highly gifted individuals in any other circumstances. There was a recognition of the strength within children, youth, and young adults who succeed against the odds. At the same time one must remember research on dysfunctional family and children of alcoholic parents, which identified extremely good behaviour and/or overachievement as a possible unbalanced outcome of living in a dysfunctional family (Farmer, 1989).

Many participants in this research study questioned the parenting skills of the community parents. However, few presented any sense of understanding of historical and contemporary Native issues that might affect families. Mindell (as cited in Deyhle & Swisher, 1997) referred to the effect of Native residential schools: "Parents were deprived of the care of their children, creating unnatural conditions in which their development as parents to full adult responsibility was affected. . . . Under normal conditions the experience of family life is preparation for future parenthood" (p. 17). The writer also commented that without the parent-child relationship experience, new parents have a "serious disability in their relationships with their own children" (p. 17).

The absence of parenting skills can impact in cognitive readiness as well. Williams (2000) stated that cognition and culture are interconnected; referring to Feuerstein, she explained that "we learn in two different ways: through direct exposure to stimuli in our environment and through mediation by significant others. The mediator, usually a parent, relative, or caregiver, helps the child to interpret and make sense of the world" (p. 139). In addition, Feuerstein suggested that "we learn to learn through the process of cultural transmission. In a mediated learning experience, a culturally initiated adult (parent, relative, caregiver) interposes herself between the stimuli in the environment and the child" (p. 140), which is crucial to successful learning. "When a

mediated person with a clear sense of self is put into an unfamiliar environment, she/he can use her/his cultural knowledge to make sense of the unknown without losing his/her sense of self" (pp. 139-140).

Aboriginal families are not the only people to suffer "traumatic losses and emotional upsets due to separation and/or loss of parents as well as separation from culture and language communities" (Williams, 2000, p. 139). According to Williams, there is a remarkable parallel between the children who were survivors of the Holocaust and the context of First Nations peoples today. Many Holocaust child survivors did not have adult family to fulfill the usual roles of mediating the experience of learning. In fact, many children survived by not trusting adults (Williams). There are other factors that distinguish the situation of Aboriginal people from that of the Holocaust survivors. However, this points out an interesting possibility for further study. Many Native parents have lost, or have become incapable of fulfilling, their "mediating roles." This may be due to residential school experiences, addictions, forced relocations, the realities of poverty, intergenerational family disruption, or dramatic loss of culture (Williams).

The presence of a mediator and other cultural support mechanisms are critical for personal security, understanding, and growth. Yet many of the school participants in this research study were critical of family and community cultural practices, such as child rearing by extended families and missing school for cultural activities. In many cases the schools are so disconnected from the community and family that they are not sure why a student is absent. The confusions and consequences from these disconnections inadvertently become part of the constant negative pressures directed at Native students from mainstream culture. This affects the Native children, youth, and eventually future generations. Delgado (1997) commented that

> Native children learn to cope and live in a Euro-American society, which means they must refrain from practising certain cultural expressions. These expressions range from Native religious practice to being part of an extended family household, both of which the dominant society frowns upon. (p. 39)

Assimilation into the mainstream society also leads Native youth to be judgmental of their clothing, body language, skin colour, and each other. This leads to conscious and subconscious beliefs of powerlessness and oppression (Delgado).

Destructive Effects of Alcoholism: One Person's Story

The majority of those interviewed during this research study spoke about the alcohol problem in the communities. However, their distance from the families and people of the community means that they do not truly know the extent of the problem and the traumatic effect on the children and youth. It is impossible to discuss important elements of Native reserve life without considering the crippling consequences of excessive alcohol consumption and drug use. Educators who are not personally involved with the community and community families often fail to see the extent of the problem. There is no doubt that they see the effects of community and family dysfunction in the classroom, yet the true extent and magnitude of these destructive forces are not seen beyond superficial symptoms observed with an individual or group of students. The effect from a child's viewpoint is also not known. Recently, a number of Native people have courageously and generously written of their experiences of being raised in dysfunctional circumstances. These stories have been revealing, insightful, and disturbing. They are also a must-read for educators of students who may be in similar circumstances.

School life is extremely difficult for those who try to get an education despite family dysfunctions such as alcohol addition. Bordewich (1996) wrote that most of the Native divorce cases and adoptions are connected to alcoholism: "Children go to bed at night seeing shouting and fighting, and drinking, and sex going on. Then they go to school and try to absorb education, but they can't because of what they saw last night at home" (p. 250). Participants of this research study commented that the violence in the community was copied and brought into the school. Morrisseau (1998) recalled:

> I remember a great deal of violence. I remember drunks fighting drunks, brothers, women fighting other women, men beating their wives, and wives beating their husbands. I watched the fights. I saw the blood spilling from the faces of drunks. I watched until all the action was over, and then I would go back to bed as if nothing happened. I prayed no one would hurt my dad and was at the same time afraid he would hurt someone. I was always afraid something bad would happen and I would end up being alone. It was a feeling that never left me. (p. 65)

Some participants in this research study believed that some students may find school to be their "refuge," their lifeline for survival, and the only hope for their future.

For these students the school can exist as an island of stability, healthy living and healthy relationships, and success. This feeling of security greatly motivates their school performance. In addition, specific support may be needed to overcome the daily burden and poor role modeling that they experience as a result of home-life dysfunctions.

The school can be an island with meaningful bridges. There are community-centred and positive, common-ground areas. For example, a First Nations school in Saskatchewan "belongs to the League of Peaceful Schools, has a tremendous dance troupe that travelled across Canada a year ago, and they have drumming and singing groups that travel all over to open events . . . and many athletic endeavours" (Varadi, 2000, p. 13). This school also offers a fully provincially accredited Cree Language program in the high school grades. In the words of the school principal, Yvonne Lederhouse, "We have fabulous students who have received many awards" (p. 13). I have personally been involved with Native schools who regularly travel to the North American Indigenous Games, perform Aboriginal drumming and singing across the country and internationally, have record CD's of their music, and organized extensive "bush programs" and Native language programs.

Accepting Responsibility

Interwoven into these drastic personal and family problems is the issue of dependency on the government. Participants in this research study felt that the students' perception was that they did not have to work or achieve because everything would be provided to them. A poor work ethic was reported as a consistent characteristic of unsuccessful students and was seen as being fostered by a lack of ambition that was based on what some participants called a "welfare mentality." Alfred (1999), a Native writer, has stated that the biggest problem is that Native people "have developed a victim mentality and blame everyone else for their oppression rather than doing the work to raise themselves out of it. The culture of dependency and the feeling of defeat are our biggest problems" (p. 37). Mackay and Myles (1989) found that some Native high school students attended school just to receive welfare support. Other Native dropouts believed that they could get welfare if they could not get a job.

As one of the research study participants commented, "Academics require ambition and participation." Academics are challenging, progressively building on the

achievement of previous learning efforts. A lack of ambition might also be tied to an unwillingness to accept responsibility for failures and attributing these failures to outside forces. However, it should be remembered that, originally, Native communities were self-sufficient and composed of self-reliant individuals. Years of manipulation, legislation, hostile government forces, sickness, and seduction by mainstream society have placed Native people in a state of dependency. Their children have internalized the accompanying dependency characteristics. Perhaps this legacy could be labelled a dependency syndrome. Watt-Cloutier et al. (2000) commented, "As the dependency-producing institutions continue to thrive, Native people are led to further dependencies on substances, processes, people, and systems. People can become destructively dependent on anything that is a substitute for wise management and control" (p. 120). Each school should work in partnership with the community to develop a plan as to how it can be part of the solution to the community and individual dependency problem.

One educator who was interviewed commented that the community was in denial. Morrisseau (1998) explained that, historically, community denial has served a purpose: "If we told anyone that sexual or physical abuse was taking place within our communities, the Children's Aid Society would come in and take our children away. Community denial was clearly a survival tactic" (p. 81).

Positive parenting, community development, and community healing practices all see individuals taking responsibility for problems and the solutions. However, the task is easier said than done. As it is with so much of modern Native life, the clear and simple solutions are at the end of a path cluttered with personal demons and obstacles. Morrisseau (1998) commented that "denial becomes a way of life for children of alcoholic parents. I hadn't realized just how often I unconsciously distorted the truth" (p. 75) and added that "because we didn't like ourselves, we began to shift the responsibility for our feelings onto others. Blame became an important part of our vocabulary" (p. 12). According to Warry (1998), Aboriginal communities are now recognizing the deeply embedded negative behaviours and processes that sustain community factionalism. People are also acknowledging that they have to have ways to openly and honestly talk about community problems. He also commented that:

> The first step in the healing journey is 'ending denial'; that is, a person must recognize that he or she has a specific problem. . . . Denial also refers to community-wide processes. . . . Ending community denial is perceived to be a critical first step in the long road to recovery. (p. 138)

Government Services

According to one Aboriginal interviewee, the root of the Native schools' problem was the "ghost of IAND." He claimed that despite various devolution strategies and new responsibilities of empowered communities, no significant structural or practical changes have resulted. IAND still influences and dictates to the schools greatly, and they therefore operate virtually the same as before. Perley (1993) agreed with this participant's view. He commented that

> there appears to be a change in the colonial situation. The broader political relationships between Aboriginals and the colonial structures of government have appeared to change from absolute control without consultation to a policy of devolution of control and movement toward self-government. The problem remains that political rhetoric and policy changes are not sufficient to change longstanding structural relationships. (p. 125)

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996) identified the need for change, with the core of this change being "a new relationship, self-determination, self-sufficiency, and healing" (Berry, 1999, p. 32). According to Berry, the process of acculturation has taken a cultural and psychological toll on Native people. He also believed that because this has "resulted from interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, the key to reestablishing a sense of well-being and a secure cultural identity resides in restructuring the relationships between these two communities" (p. 2). This was confirmed by Rindone (1988), who stated that "organization of true Native education requires an alternative conceptualization of relationships among the elements of education with the essential elements being similar but arranged and organized differently" (p. 6). Jane Stewart (Castellano et al., 2000), the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, stated, "We first need to understand that over and above hundreds of individual recommendations, the Commissioners directed us to examine the very core of how we have lived together in this country" (p. 154).

Government's Role and Equality in Outcomes

Schools involved in this research study seemed confused as to from whom to take direction. In some areas they would be guided by the community leaders, in some areas by the government, and in other areas by the common practices of mainstream education. This is a confusing circumstance, and the ambiguity allows schools or people to choose their methods, programs, and direction to suit their convenience, which is not always the best strategy and is without meaningful accountability for anybody involved. Despite the government's strategies of devolution and self-government, the federal government still has a role in the current educational and community circumstances. Yet those involved in this study felt that special-needs testing, curricula, and other supports were missing. The government talks about community "capacity building" but does not effectively support the development of this long-term need given current Native school inadequacies and failings. According to Watt-Cloutier et al. (2000):

> Our education system must be developed in parallel with, even slightly ahead of, our emerging self-government as part of an overall plan. Since the movement for self-government is in advanced stages, our education system must be capable of rapid development. Education systems in the South are not built for rapid change, and it would be a mistake to copy southern structures. (p. 126)

According to Morris (as cited in Hampton, 2000), originally the government committed itself to equal educational outcomes. Elders have testified that the Queen's representative stated, "Your children will be taught, and then they will be as able to take care of themselves as the whites around them" (p. 213). The failures of the Alberta achievement test indicate that Native people have not achieved self-sufficiency. Morris commented that the "equal outcome standard is higher than that of equal access or equal resources for education. Achieving it requires not only access to resources for education, but institutions, structures, curriculum, and pedagogy that are educationally effective" (p. 212).

Inadequate Special-Needs Education Strategies and Funding

Teachers in this research study commented that their classes consisted of a large number of special-needs students. They felt that this was much greater than the number for which they would be responsible in a provincial school class. Some participants were

experienced in both systems. The teachers surveyed identified this as a significant reason for lower provincial achievement results and frequently poor school performance. The teachers surveyed were frustrated that the pattern of poor academic performance had not resulted in the school system making sufficient efforts to deal with these student needs. They were also quick to comment that a large number of their students were cognitively skilled and capable learners. Some interviewees also commented that Native students' skills often go underestimated. However, most participants felt that they were struggling to meet the needs of the majority of students in any manner. These educators believed that a very significant number of students possessed schooling disadvantages that would classify them as special-needs students in a typical urban school. This skewed the class composition in terms of behaviour and the number of students with individualized learning needs. Some claimed to have knowledge of students who had transferred between community and urban school and had been programmed as special needs in the urban school but not in the reserve school. Is this discrimination by the urban schools, or is this a lack of support and/or diagnostic skill by the Native schools? Students can perform differently in different circumstances, but the teacher does not seem to be aware of any explanations.

Principals in this research study commented on the expensive professional assessment Catch-22 that they experience. To receive special funding, a student needs to meet specific assessment criteria. This expert assessment is paid for by the school; if the student does not meet the funding requirements, then the school is not reimbursed. Schools cannot afford to pay for assessments that are not reimbursed, and therefore many assessments go unrequested. In the principals' opinion, there is a great need to simplify and open up special-needs funding.

The interviewed principals also suspected that urban schools were exempting Native students from the Alberta achievement test who would not have been exempted in their home schools. Principals in this research study claimed that they exempted few if any students from writing the test. Teachers confirmed this and felt that some very low students would experience emotional or school career harm if they were forced to write the test. Examples of this harm were the destruction of self-reinforced feelings of failure and, as a result of these, the possibility of dropping out of school.

In reserve schools, achieving equality of outcome may be more difficult than in mainstream schools. According to interviewees, classrooms in a Native community seem to have a disproportionate number of special-needs students compared to the larger provincial counterpart. The recognition of this fact has become more dramatic and consequential given the recent successes that the Native schools and communities have achieved. Recent increases in attendance, parental and student desires for success, and greater knowledge of the function and purpose of school have had a positive impact on teachers' ability to teach meaningful curriculum. It can be speculated that as the teaching and learning emphasis increases, so do the opportunities and necessities for identifying special learning disadvantages within individual students. The increase in academic programming in Native classrooms has served to highlight previously hidden special-needs students and issues. The participants in this research study reported that specialist and teacher assessment were finding many students exhibiting a significant delay in language acquisition. They felt that language support was very important to create a basis for achievement. It is ironic that the successes of Native education would bring to light an even greater need.

Unteachable Classes and Student Modeling

Some participants in this research study commented that in the Native community the large number of disadvantaged students creates a "norm" that is skewed towards a special-needs average, which places the school in a very difficult position. It seems that schools do not want to share publicly that the number of special-needs students is larger than in most schools because they do not want to offend or unintentionally appear to be prejudiced. The principals commented that adequate special-needs funding would need to be significant and that it is unlikely that it would be provided.

The classroom teacher in this research study had the daily reality of dealing with a significant number and variety of social, behavioural, cognitive, and emotional special needs while attempting to educate those students and the typical below-average, average, and above-average student. This is a common challenge of teaching, especially when the required support for inclusive schooling philosophies and practices is absent.

When the learning or behaviour challenged students are in the majority, either in numbers or demands, it can be considered a "critical mass." One very demanding child in

a classroom of 20 regular students provides a wonderful opportunity for inclusive schooling and positive peer role modeling. Two or three students of this nature with an experienced teacher may be equally beneficial. However, there comes a point when the number and severity of factors relating to the special-needs aspect of a classroom becomes a power that is beyond the teacher's and teacher assistant's (if any) ability to facilitate classroom learning. The unfortunate reality is that a critical mass of students who are reluctant learners and who persistently exhibit dysfunctional behaviours and/or emotional instability can make it impossible for the teacher to teach effectively. They can paralyse teaching and the learning of others.

One interviewee commented that "if the behaviour is obnoxious, then you're coming to that kid all the time because you're trying to make him behave so that the whole class can learn." Therefore it is impossible for dedicated students to learn and develop positive school habits. In some cases this can create classrooms that are natural and effective learning environments for passing on negative behaviours. In other words, if the critical mass of students' characteristics are negative, then it is very possible for the positive students to be negatively influenced by negative peer role modeling.

This brings up the difference between special learning needs and inclusion, and students with at-risk behaviours. Departments of Education and special-needs interest groups have passionately and effectively argued for inclusive schooling. Parents and educators have been convinced of the benefit of this approach for all students and for society at large. However, the discussion has centred on two critical premises. One premise is that adequate funding for personnel and equipment resources (including funds for texts such as high-interest/low-vocabulary readers) would be available. The second more hidden premise is that the discussions centre around those students with learning handicaps and physical disadvantages, not those with severe and/or dangerous behavioural problems. There are few parents, teachers, or principals who would not welcome a physically challenged or learning disadvantaged student in any classroom.

The issue remains with the behavioural or emotional problem student. Unfortunately, classrooms and schools still do not have the personnel resources to deal with more than a few severely reluctant learners who persistently exhibit dysfunctional behaviours and/or emotional instability. These students are often classified as "at risk."

What advocates and government consultants need to do is help schools deal with these extremely disruptive students (training, resources, and personnel). Instead, they continue with the old and now unnecessary inclusion arguments for physically and mentally challenged students. Teachers who resist inclusive schooling are not against these students; they are protesting the existing circumstances that they face with the severe behavioural problem students.

Student Violence

Teachers in this research study were concerned about student violence. Some comments were, "I've noticed, more on the reserve than any other school I've ever been in, and I've been in quite a few"; and "The violence that happens here is far more rampant than we would find in an urban school." The violence seen in children can be attributed to a number of things. Some felt that students were copying behaviours that they see at home. In addition, Morrisseau (1998) wrote, "For children who grow up in painful families, feelings of anger, powerlessness, apathy, sadness, anxiety, and disgust are often expressed as a means of getting attention" (p. 51). The responsibility of the school is to protect the well-being of all students attending the school. Therefore a major issue for the school is, when do a student's visible frustrations, anger, and/or inability to cope become rage? In recent years student rage has taken on catastrophic consequences with shootings in Canadian and American schools.

Although liability was not brought up as a concern in this research study, the concern of violence allows this dissertation to digress slightly. Educators and government bodies are responsible for requiring hundreds of children and youth to be together on a daily basis. This is even legislated. They are aware of the violence that some students exhibit and the desperate social circumstances under which many live. If adequate counselling, anger management, and educational circumstances that build students' self-esteem and coping skills are not effectively provided for these and other students, then those in charge of this education may be liable should a student-rage disaster occur. Would the courts see this as educators and the government knowingly placing school children at risk, providing an unacceptable level of care, failing to meet their legislated duties, or malpractice?

Concern over violence and related family dysfunctions was frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Adams and Ryan (1999) suggested that "while therapeutic interventions in the family are potentially useful, the most immediate effects are likely to come from educationally oriented efforts to promote the development in children of more effective academic skills and work habits" (p. 36). They asserted that "working directly with children on skill development will enable them to overcome most of the negative effects of poor parenting and disadvantaging economic conditions" (p. 36) and recommended "interventions that target family processes and relations, the parent-child relationship, and parent education programs" (p. 37). However, it is suggested that intervention with general family processes is considerably more difficult because mental health services are more expensive and specialized.

School counselling programs, sufficient staffing, and appropriate programming to deal with needy students and circumstances must be in place. Meaningful counselling programs for Native schools should include individual counselling for reconnection and resiliency development and schoolwide programs on bullying or harassment, assault, sexual health, suicide, and depression. Schools should also provide for the development of peer helpers, tutors, and mentors and the development of self-esteem through achievement and involvement. The final outcome should be positive, autonomous expression and security with one's self (Murray, 2001).

The previous discussion may be considered lengthy by some readers. It has been responsive to a great deal of the interviewees' comments for two reasons. First, I felt that researcher integrity demands that as many of the interviewees' views as possible require comprehensive consideration. This is simple respect for those involved and allows the reader an opportunity to gain understandings from many views. Second, the substantial number of issues dealt with demonstrates that Native education is a complex, multifaceted entity that is interwoven into an extremely large number of complex variables. A Native school is affected by the many contexts within which it exists. The school's ability to control, respond to, and benefit from the varying constraints and opportunities that emerge are greatly enhanced by the understandings discussed in this chapter. It is intended that the findings highlighted in this discussion, the literature

discussed, and my insights will offer sufficient knowledge to allow Native educators and leaders to chart their schools' future.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

During this research study it became apparent that the educators interviewed consistently acknowledged that significant problems exist; however, an understanding of the root causes and solutions appears to be absent. Those few educators with concrete and potentially beneficial suggestions concentrated and limited their thoughts to one or a few areas of school, student, and community dynamics. The staff were inconsistent and divided on educational approaches, at best. This leaves the schools with fragmented educational efforts, processes, and programming. Therefore, the recommendations section of this dissertation is presented as a comprehensive framework for Aboriginal education in the school setting. The overwhelming number of recommendations, the scarcity of Aboriginal school models, and the desire for this research to be practice centred also combined to motivate me to approach the thesis recommendations in this manner. In keeping with the practical application philosophy, the model is not only expressed in Chapter 7 as a short document, but it is also summarized as a detailed figure (Figure 1).

The recommendation section of this thesis is presented in two chapters. The current chapter outlines the rationale and approach to be used. The next chapter consists of a recommendation discussion arranged into a number of related themes. These themes and their subsections represent a model for school improvement and success in an Aboriginal educational context. The model description chapter (7) is not intended to offer an in-depth discussion of each category and the needs within these. These discussions can be found in related literature found in the reference list and/or in previous chapters of this dissertation. I hope that the headings and short descriptions will provide sufficient insight for the initial understanding of the model.

I sincerely believe that throughout this study I have employed theoretical sensitivity. This is "the ability to recognize what is important in data and to give it meaning" (Glasser; as cited in Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 46), which is critical for the "formulating of theory that is faithful to the reality of the phenomena under study" (p. 46). Corbin and Strauss explained that theoretical sensitivity has three sources:

(a) continually and inquisitively interacting with the data, (b) being knowledgeable about the literature, and (c) having significant professional and personal experience. These three components have combined to create a recommendation section that I have represented as a model for Native school requirements. This serves to blend the main research concepts and themes that emerged from this study with relevant literature and professional experience. In this way research theory and practice have been integrated. These models not only allow for a clear and organized expression of the findings and related concepts and themes, but also provide opportunity for the researcher to reflect on the emerging theory. Corbin and Strauss referred to the need for research to have a theoretical framework to hold up to scrutiny and to have conceptual density and conceptual specificity (p. 141).

The need for a model for Aboriginal school success is also demonstrated by the scarcity of comprehensive models for Native schools. A study conducted by the British Columbia provincial government (Government of British Columbia, 2002) concluded that there was research on most aspects of Aboriginal education, but no educational models or frameworks exist. A review of the literature reveals that the research exists as a collage of ideas and practices that has not been synthesized into a working and practice-centred framework. Smith (2000) commented that it is "important to understand that we need to move beyond the simple application of a 'bag of tricks'" (p. 68). Hopkins (1998) observed that "the challenge of enhancing student achievement requires a purposeful and strategic response" (p. 1035). He referred to it as a complex problem and saw many educational initiatives "simply tinkering at the edges" (p. 1035).

The model suggested in this dissertation is divided into concepts and categories. However, the implementation cannot be limited to concentrating on a few areas of preference or convenience. It should be noted that mainstream schools have the benefit of having foundational relationships, mandates, and methodologies established. Native schools are starting from the beginning and building. Hopkins (1998) believed that school improvement efforts that are singular fail to a "greater or lesser degree to effect the culture of the school" (p. 1044). The model presented in this dissertation is comprehensive and will require realistic development plans; a school may not be able to improve in all areas at once. However, as each school year ends in failure or inadequacy

for a majority of Aboriginal students, the personal and social costs accumulate. If the school and support agencies are considering the current individual students' lives and their well-being, time is of the essence. Therefore, support agencies and partners need to also identify where and how they can help school staff progress through this model of requirements. The local band council, Social Services, health departments, community members, and educators all need to plan and provide together.

Beyond the urgent need is the accumulative benefit of multiple areas of success. Hopkins (1998) referred to a synergy that can be created when improvements and integration in curriculum and instruction, organization and development, and decentralization of decision making occur. The effective implementation of the model presented here should result in an unpredictable but positive synergy. Given the number of children, youth, and adults with whom an Aboriginal community-orientated school is involved, this synergy should also have significant impact on the community.

A Model for Leadership

This research study has found that the Native schools were not successful because they did not incorporate a broad and all-encompassing Aboriginal-based educational model. Once an Aboriginal-centred framework for school success has been created, it is dependent on the school leader to develop the school into the ideal. Therefore, the requirements of an Aboriginal school model created in this dissertation are also presented as an Aboriginal school leadership model. Aboriginal school leadership is a development process and must be qualified by the aspirations and priorities of the community. The leadership must also be defined by specific community needs, issues of power and social equity, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural bridging and competency development, and Aboriginal identity.

This framework can be achieved only by an effective, knowledgeable, and cross-culturally skilled school leader. Block (1993) commented that leadership is well suited to this Aboriginal model of school leadership and that leadership builds on existing strengths and provides stewardship and service to others. Pavlik's (1988) observations of Aboriginal school principalships made 14 years ago are still valid today. He commented that such a school leader must be people orientated, sensitive, warm, caring, flexible, and honest; must see Native schools as unique and be a specialist in Aboriginal education;

must believe that Native children can succeed; must work with and become part of the community; and must be dedicated and committed. Complicating the task of Native school leadership is the fact that "there appears to be little research that explicitly addresses the issue of leadership in a northern setting" (Foster & Goddard, 2001, p. 3). For the purposes of this dissertation, *northern* also refers to Native communities. Leithwood (as cited in Foster & Goddard) added that "most published theory and empirical research in [educational] administration assumes that leadership is being exercised in a western cultural context" (p. 3).

Schools in this research study need to be more focussed and responsive to their specific context. All schools operate in a socioeconomic context and are affected by all elements of this context. A context in this sense can be seen as "the economic and social forces that effect the education system, but are beyond the direct influence of the system" (GNWT, 2000, p. 6). To plan, program, or operate in any way without considering and adjusting to the specific school context will result in misdirected efforts. Hopkins (1998) asserted that "strategies for school development need to fit the 'growth state' or particular culture of the school" (p. 1048). He commented that there are context-specific factors to consider in any school-improvement initiative and that consideration should be given to the socioeconomic status of the catchment area, the age levels of staff, the relational variables (staff), the openness of historic leadership styles, the local education authority, the local market situation of the school, and the nature and effect of strategy on instruction.

A central consideration in Aboriginal schools is the ethnocultural diversity of Aboriginal schools, in this case between the adult educators and the students and their parents, which creates a circumstance that makes it important for educational leaders to consider how these schools can address issues of power, voice, and equity (Foster & Goddard, 2001). The dynamics of power are central in the relationships that exist throughout Aboriginal education. According to Goulet (2001), the way in which "power is used in a relationship can either develop trust or mistrust" (p. 73). Goulet also commented that, "by using cultural norms in the classroom, teachers share power in their classroom by developing and respecting student autonomy" (p. 75). Goulet referred to this as equalling power relations. Nieto (as cited in Glass, 2001) noted that "most multi-

cultural education approaches fail to address injustice and the challenges of transforming inequitable power relations" (p. 15). These comments address significant societal issues such as colonization, assimilation, race and class exclusion, self-determination, prejudices, and ethnocentric teaching styles and curricula.

My observations and transcript analysis found that the Native schools that I visited operated as mainstream Canadian schools with very little, if any, specialized Aboriginal programming. There were notable efforts and an articulated willingness to integrate Native culture into the mainstream curriculum priorities. However, the approaches that were dedicated to Native goals had limited impact and may have been misdirected because they lacked a larger Aboriginal school culture. A lack of relevant culture and history prevents student "efforts to transform oppressive realities" (Glass, 2001, p. 17). Glass commented that "when the oppressed know their history, they understand their situation and see themselves not fatalistically as an unchangeable state of affairs; . . . but rather they understand their daily lives as presenting concrete problems along with opportunities for transformation" (p. 17). From the point of view of Freire (as cited in Jackson, 1982) "Learning must begin from the reality of the learner and from the concrete, daily struggles in which the learner engages, . . . [and] . . . power relations between the facilitator and the learner must be ones of equality. Only then can true dialogue occur" (p. 3). Complicating matters have been frequently changing reforms in mainstream education. Braden and Good (2000) stated that education "has suffered from abrupt, and dichotomous choices (e.g., phonics versus whole language)" (p. 746). These issues and the lack of cultural programming have left Native students with an ineffective and fragmented education.

The Aboriginal schools in this research study represent students who require both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture, coordinated in a well-thought-out school strategy. Today's Native elders and leaders recognize and welcome such an approach (Government of Canada, 1996). The Dogrib people refer to the metaphor "Strong like two people" (Dogrib Divisional, 1991). Robbins (1991) presented an additional perspective:

> While it is true that we as Indian people can be very proud of the wonderful cultures created by our tribes over the centuries, true Indian cultures are in the making and always have been. The concept of Indian culture as something

> unchanging is a mystification. Indian cultures develop as new generations encounter new environments. Traditions are maintained but acquire ever-changing new significance. The problems are to recognize the place we are in, to develop the kind of social relations we want and need, and to decide our own concept of Indianness. (p. 3)

A model for Native education needs to address and bridge a large number of Native student, family, and community issues and needs. The model must also accomplish mainstream educational outcomes. The school principal is the school's central culture broker in the Native community and school relationship. Therefore, more Aboriginal administrators are needed (Legare, 1998). Failing this, Legare suggested that principals be chosen for their qualities as intercultural leaders. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that principals are key to the change progress, student successes, and school culture. Therefore, this framework is also developed as a model of leadership in an Aboriginal school. This allows for the prioritizing of effective approaches, convenient school analysis, and progressive planning. The need for this approach can be seen from Foster and Goddard's (2001) research. They found that

> among stakeholders in these northern schools, there are multiple and often conflicting perceptions regarding the role of and effectiveness of the principal and the goals and purposes of schooling. In particular, we argue that there is a widespread belief among northern educators that dominant Western notions of schooling and leadership are preferable, and that this belief often is in conflict with the student, parent, and community. (p. 11)

The integrity and authenticity of the model are based on a leadership focus that develops the school through a community-based educational approach. This is likely to be Aboriginal; however, each community is unique and will require a process to identify its unique school culture. The Dogrib communities of the Northwest Territories met in a remote and isolated, traditional and spiritual gathering place to initiate conversations on community needs, directions, and education. They then met for a number of days in one of the communities to establish goals, values, and needs for their schools. No educators, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, were allowed to attend these sessions. The educators were given transcripts of the meeting and asked to articulate them in a mission statement. A series of meetings were held on the developing mission statement, until the statement was finally approved by the regional and local boards (DDBE, 1991). Many years later a

survey found that community members were still very knowledgeable and committed to the mission statement. The Government of the Northwest Territories (2000) wrote that

> the establishment and maintenance of culture-based schooling are dependent upon a strong sense of community ownership. Culture-based schooling requires ongoing input from a broad range of people especially those with personal commitment to the students in any given community. (p. 12)

The Government of the Northwest Territories uses culture-based and community-based schooling fairly interchangeably. Taking the concept of culture-based education to a community that has a diverse ethnic representation expands the concept to being community based.

Change Principles

The schools involved in this research study would require significant change if they were to adopt the model of leadership suggested in this dissertation. In fact, a review of the literature and my personal experience indicate that the vast majority of Native schools would require change. This study found that the participants were dedicated and caring professional educators. However, there were frequently direct or indirect comments that showed the interviewees' frustration with what they perceived to be forced changes from the band, IAND, or school administration. Teachers also perceived that there were currently insufficient staff to support student needs and teacher programming, which was also a source of dissatisfaction. Given that the status quo is not perceived as satisfactory or adequate, the suggestion of a new model or orientation in thinking is likely to meet with resistance. Therefore, it is prudent to implement the model with principles of change in mind. This is especially true in the circumstance of Native schools, which are complicated by historical tensions, uneven distributions of power, a large and varied group of stakeholders (students, parents, staff, and associated organizations and community business), and a changing governance model. Royal and Rossi (1997) cautioned that, when developing a sense of community within the school, more than favourable school structural arrangements are required. In fact, changes can be very disruptive unless rooted in the commitment of teachers.

According to Duck (2001), five stages of change must be considered for successful restructuring: (a) stagnation a depressed or hyperactive organization exists;

(b) preparation leaders are involved in planning and communication; (c) implementation more people are involved through a multiple-layer approach; (d) determination conflicts, failures, and successes occur; and (e) fruition the results are realized. Throughout all of these, it is important to be highly sensitive to emotional, social, and behavioural issues related to the stress of change (Duck). Change can be supported with a consistent and meaningful message, as well as a clear communication of trust and empowerment. In addition, support and sufficient community and educator inservice and dialogue are required. Dialogue is critical and will not only provide comfort to stakeholders, but will also elicit valuable ideas and information for thorough planning, implementation, and development. This will also allow for the creation of a core set of values that will unite formal and informal groups within and around the organization. Different groups can still maintain their individuality, but should develop common understandings and goals (Duck).

Herriot and Gross (1979) indicated that the stages of change will be affected by the extent that management ensures the following five conditions: There is a clear understanding of the innovation; the required skills and capabilities are present; materials, equipment, and resources are available; elements incongruent with innovation are adjusted or removed; and established, motivated organizational members are prepared to exert the necessary time and effort. Levin (as cited in Peters, 1986) recognized that many well-timed elements are needed for effective implementation. He also suspected that "strong leadership was possibly the most important single condition contributing to effective implementation" (p. 33).

It is interesting that each school visited had a few examples of excellent Aboriginal programming, orientations, and approaches. These efforts were notable, but at least partially negated by an absence of a sufficient number of Native-centred initiatives. It is possible that these were isolated efforts or the remnants of larger, schoolwide approaches that have become neglected or diluted over time. This offers a caution to those starting any new initiative such as this model. Once the model is in existence and the school is experiencing the expected success, it is not difficult to re-enter stagnation. Duck (2001) referred to this stagnation as a "creeping danger." This can be avoided by celebrating and rewarding accomplishments, developing a continual learning

organization, ensuring that employees internalize and understand the change process so that they can be more flexible in the future, continuously listening and communicating, and remembering that today's innovation can be changed (Duck).

Fullan (2000) commented that his

> experience with many multi-year change processes has led to the following time guidelines. One can improve an elementary school in about two to three years; high schools five to six years; districts (obviously depending on size) would take six to eight years. (p. 20)

Fullan also remarked that "with greater know-how the preceding rates can be shortened slightly, . . . (and) these 'successes,' after three, five, and eight years, are real fragile. If changes are not institutionalized; they are easily undone by a change in leadership or direction" (p. 20). The author reminded the reader that an important goal in reform is to sustain it, which he noted is accomplished through continuous effort, development, and improvement beyond the initial investment.

CHAPTER 7

ABORIGINAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODEL

The discussion chapter was organized into five discussion headings that emerged from the study transcripts analysis and concept, theme, and category development process. Amalgamating this study's research concepts with a review of the literature has refined these Native school needs categories and established two new ones. This results in seven major components that have been organized to create a framework of essential Native school requirements that also serve as a model for Native school leadership. The categories are foundation as an Aboriginal community; clear school identity; community relations; instructional practices; management, government, and leadership; family and community; and community capacity. These are all complex areas that are represented as categories with numerous subrequirements within each category. These categories are discussed in this chapter and summarized in a one-page model (Figure 1). The organization of this model loosely follows the elaborated leadership obstacle course model (Herriott & Gross, 1979). The ELOC model identifies stages and essential leadership tasks for a specific process. The original content of the ELOC is limited to the change process. Coincidentally, the change process is likely to be an essential aspect of the implementation of this model; it was discussed in Chapter 6. Unique to the model being presented is the concept of compensating strategies, which is discussed at the conclusion of this chapter.

The task of organizing concepts into these categories is subjective. This is informed by the literature, this dissertation's research, and my experience. These assumptions positively build the premise that, when necessary, the school can function as an 'island of routine, peace, and success' for students. The presence of a successful Native school environment and positive and culturally sensitive educational practices will also increase the likelihood that students will progress despite family and community dysfunctions. The assumptions underlying this organization are as follows:

1. The ELOC model is a legitimate and helpful basis for educational planning and the Aboriginal school leadership model.

2. There is a Native educational need for a developmental model.

School as an Aboriginal Community (Foundation)	Community Relations	Instructional Practices	Management, Government and Leadership	Family and Community
• Cultural and community-based programming and decision making • Honouring and facilitating cultural aspirations • Maintaining sustainable cultural processes and infrastructure • Reinforcing community rather than the individual • Regular Aboriginal immersion experiences **Clear School Identity** • Program for Aboriginal identity and values • Establishing daily Aboriginal experiences • Sharing power with students, and community • Planning with consideration of the cultural and socio-economic context • Situating elders and community people in meaningful roles	• Persistent positive attitudes • Two-way dialogues • Clear, frequent, and honest communication with cross-cultural understanding • Positive families/students leading the school to success • Avoiding the enabling of parent problems (e.g., by silence, low standards etc.) • Ensuring student social engagement and belonging • Programming to teach social skills in both cultures • Seeing teachers as a visible part of community • Frequent home visits • Teachers learning the students' world & culture • Reflective processes • Non-Aboriginals suspending previous world view and assumptions • Ensuring the school is actively in rhythm with the community	• Competency in two cultures is critical • Elders to be teachers • Positive and personal relationships between teachers and students • Resiliency development • Native learning styles and relevancy • Courses provided in Native identity, history, issues, and with local relevance • Shared power in learning with teacher as cultural brokers developing cross-cultural competence • High profile in areas where students excel (e.g., athletics, art, practical, outdoor ed.) • Diagnostic assessment for student programming • Quality school experience with full and varied academic engagement • High expectations in all areas including academic curriculum	• Harmonizing school and community ideas and needs • Positive relationships • Test and standards influencing school improvement • Reporting test results in context (e.g., test scores and attendance) • Developing a community vision for success • Educating for autonomy • Ensuring accountability, transparency, and direction • Strategic planning with all stakeholders • Ensuring staff security, appreciation, and equitable compensation and benefits • Funding full-time Elders and cultural specialist • Creating teachable classes • Broad funding for special needs and at-risk students	• Identifying, celebrating, and utilizing local family strengths and family systems • Part of community healing from the effect of assimilation • Supporting the reversal of community and family dependency on others • Assisting families to accept and be skilled in child-raising responsibilities (e.g., workshops, counselling) • Attending to students' hierarchy of basic needs and any barriers to learning • Supporting effective Native pedagogy used in the home • Identifying and programming for students who are gradually fading out • Ensuring that mental health workers and youth counsellors are in the schools, and supported by Native counsellors and Elders • Preschool early childhood programs in the community
Community Capacity: Native community schools require an egalitarian perspective as an intrinsic value. Working with the community may also increase school human and facility resources through training and other partnerships. Capacity building is dependent on individual wholeness and academic, social, and career competency. It centres on education, but requires a multi-agency and stakeholder approach.				

Figure 1. Requirements of an Aboriginal school.

3. It is the role of the school to provide an effective education to all students regardless of family or community problems, issues, or dysfunction.

4. Community issues and problems can be compensated for with partnership and programming.

5. The school must be practicing sound and supportive Aboriginal educational approaches before it can be an effective agent for community and family development.

The model for Native school leadership is centred on seven categories of Native school requirements; represented within these categories are 59 subrequirements. Figure 1 outlines the requirement categories and subrequirements. The framework is intended to be implemented and interpreted from left to right and top to bottom. The order of categories does not represent any prioritization in importance, but progressive programming that ensures each category builds on the previous. Many of the requirements on the right side cannot be meaningfully implemented without the left side's foundational practices and orientations in place. For example, the schools in this research study had succeeded in many areas of Aboriginal programming, but without an authentic and broad Aboriginal base within the school, these programs were isolated and hollow. Left as a last consideration in this model is the category of community capacity. Successful support of this area should see the community self-sustaining, regenerating, and solving its own problems.

School as an Aboriginal Community

A first and most critical step in Native school success is to create schools that are authentically Native. Represented in Figure 1 as a foundational requirement is that the school be an Aboriginal community. This is derived from the culture and practices of the community. It begins with a philosophical foundation of that clarifies values, guides decision making, and sets up the formal school culture. This should determine all school philosophies, goals, routines, approaches, programs, daily decisions, and priorities. The school itself should be an Aboriginal community. According to Calliou (1993), "Community is not just a collection of individuals, but individuals who choose to identify themselves as a formed community and to live within that structure as intimates and not strangers" (p. 30). This is certainly a description to which any school would aspire. In the

case of Native schools, it is best accomplished if the individuals are able to immerse themselves in their natural culture and advance from that familiar base.

Participants of this study frequently referred to their students as having low or poor self-esteem. This was cited as an underlying cause of poor academic performance. Reyner (1988) commented that the minority and marginalized position of the Native child conspires to create a low measure of self-efficacy. Reyner stated that the families have been "conquered, subjugated, segregated and regarded as inherently inferior by the dominant group; educational failure is regarded . . . as the natural consequence of the minority group's inherent inferiority" (p. 39).

Native social and culture disorganization has resulted in individuals who are only partially in the Aboriginal and the mainstream culture. These people live on the margin of each society, develop unique psychological dispositions, and experience personal tensions and dissonance while living the conflict of two worlds. Stonequist (1937) explained this as follows:

> Briefly, it is a contrast, tension or conflict of social groups divergent in race or possessing distinct cultures in which members of one group are seeking to adjust themselves to the group believed to possess greater prestige and power. The groups are in a relationship of inequality, whether or not this openly asserted. The individuals of the subordinate or minority group whose social contacts have led them to become partially assimilated and psychologically identified with the dominant group without being fully accepted, are in the marginal situation. They are on the margin of each society, partly in and partly out. They experience mentally the contrasts, tensions, or conflicts of the two races or cultures and tend to become a characteristic type of personality. This is particularly the case when the clash of societies is fundamental and inclusive; when it derives from historic differences of race and nationality. (p. 121)

Educators interviewed in this research study frequently criticized the actions and behaviours of their students. A cultural base and orientation will prevent what Ogbu (as cited in Ward, 1992) referred to as *oppositional identity*. While explaining why some minorities follow school behaviours that are opposite to those needed for academic success, Ogbu theorized that minority students were deliberately contrasting themselves with the dominant group. With the usual pathways to societal success and advancement not available because of racism, minorities reject these measures of success. In addition, if minority students practice the attitudes and behaviours that lead to mainstream success,

they consciously or unconsciously feel that they have willingly accepted the acculturation process. According to Ward (1992), oppositional identity is present when the paths for advancement in mainstream society are not available. So "adopting attitudes and behaviours that lead to successful acquisition of literacy or academic work is defined consciously or unconsciously as a one-way linear acculturation" (p. 37).

The Government of the Northwest Territories (1991) identified culture-based schooling as a priority in the learning process and explained that

> children's environment and culture shape their values, determine their world view and provide their early experiences. School experiences are more meaningful and relevant for students when the languages and cultures of the community are reflected and incorporated into the entire life of the school. This strengthens the students' sense of identity and promotes a positive self-esteem which, in turn enhances learning. (p. 3)

Interestingly, Deyhle and Swisher (1997) cautioned against blindly and simply following the path of traditional culture. They also pointed out that the concept of youth learning both the traditional way of life and the modern world is actually very difficult. This "ignores complex cultural shifts in American Indian societies creating a stereotypic traditional culture" (p. 165). It also

> ignores that the world of the Anglos is only marginally available to these young people as a choice because of poverty, discrimination and lower teacher expectations of their success, . . . [and] . . . this metaphor shuts down the possibility of yet a third world reflected in Indian youths' contemporary lives, and therefore, works to deny them a firm sense of cultural identity. (p.105)

Clear School Identity

The philosophical basis discussed above lays out a school philosophy and approach. Figure 1 pairs this with the category of "clear school identity." Most organizations have two identities: the mission statement and the daily practice. Often a school's stated philosophy does not match the reality experienced by students and practised by staff. At least three questions need to be constantly reviewed to authentically implement the philosophical foundation of the school and to ensure a matched daily reality: (a) What is the educational context, including parents, students, and the community? (b) Does the program match the context of the students' daily lives? and

(c) Is the school in rhythm with the community? A Native school without a meaningful Aboriginal daily practice or not in sync with the community will dissociate itself from the Aboriginal students. This is a critical element of Native student school engagement and a prerequisite to academic engagement and fulfilment.

Mainstream schools reinforce and teach the social norms and identities relevant to their communities. Schools in this research study followed mainstream social goals rather than those relevant to the specific community. Aboriginal schools need to serve their community in the same way as mainstream schools do. This would greatly benefit community and student well-being. Berry participated as a consultant in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996) study known as *The Aboriginal Culture Identity Project*. From this research experience Berry (1999) wrote a subsequent paper on Aboriginal culture and identity. Berry referred to Aboriginal cultural identity as "an internal (symbolic) state (made up of cognitive, affective and motivational components) and external (behavioural) expression of being an Aboriginal person (individual emphasis), and a member of an Aboriginal community (social emphasis)" (p. 6). The schools are constant participants in the symbolic and behavioural aspects of these identity components. In Berry's words, to be a positive and sustaining influence on an Aboriginal person's identity formation and maintenance, schools should consider that

> a positive Aboriginal cultural identity is comprised of a number of interrelated features, including the perception of oneself as Aboriginal, considering this to be important, having positive feelings about being Aboriginal, wanting to remain an Aboriginal person, and expressing these in one's daily behaviour. Various degrees of a negative Aboriginal cultural identity are comprised of: not seeing oneself as Aboriginal; but if so, not considering it to be important; but if important, not liking or enjoying it; but if so, not wanting to maintain it; but if so, not being able to express it in daily life. A consolidated cultural identity is present when there is inconsistency or uncertainty. (p. 6)

If Berry's comments are applied to a school, the damage that a school can do with an inconsistent and/or confused school identity can be seen. In this sense the school's daily practice provides a truer indicator of school identity than does the mission statement. A sincere review of the daily practice will also reveal how school nurtures or hinders the development and expression of student identity.

Grant (1985) took the concept of school and cultural identity into a daily student and school practice perspective. He stated that

> the importance of the relationship between culture and self is manifested in the fact that students, regardless of racial and cultural background, will gravitate to the 'environment' that enhances their perception of self. Stated more specifically, they will seek those environments where they are understood, respected, and encouraged. The influence that our sociocultural environment has on our development makes it mandatory that we accept and affirm our pluralistic society. (p. 102)

Therefore a school that functions as an Aboriginal community will be significantly different in critical areas compared to most of the current Native schools, which operate with a mainstream orientation. The Joe Duquette High School (not part of this study) demonstrates an Aboriginal community approach in many ways. According to Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998), who prepared a discussion paper for the Councils of Ministers of Education Canada Pan-Canadian Research Agenda, the approach is to provide

> a democratic, fair environment in which students can find safety, tolerance, egalitarian treatment and a non-judgmental, non-punitive place to stay and learn, at least during the day. Significantly the school is conducted within a spiritual/cultural context that frames the day to day activities of the students and staff. (p. 13)

The authors also commented that some examples of the approach used at the Joe Duquette school are that symbols of authority are minimized, staff meetings are in full view of the student body (there is no staff room), issues about the continuance of a student are dealt with collectively, and bullying or violent students are given the choice to leave the school or apologize and convince the victim that he/she will be safe from now on (expulsion can occur as well). The Joe Duquette High School "provides a strong example of the kinds of mutuality that need to occur between education and social justice, . . . ultimately promoting interdependency, not absolute dependency" (p. 14).

There are shared goals and purposes between some mainstream educational initiatives and Aboriginal approaches. Some programs that have common emphases with Native views are restitution, character-based education, social and emotional learning curricula, and service learning. Writers such as Kessler (2000) addressed the spiritual

well-being of children and identified ways that educators can help students find connection, compassion, and character.

Community Relations

The dialogue with the interviewees of this research study covered many topics; however, comments about community relations and families were the most frequent. Figure 1 shows this category before instructional practices. The importance and value of instruction is not in question. However, without positive community and family relationships a teacher's efforts are seriously handicapped. These relations lay the foundation for successful teaching and student receptiveness. In this model for Aboriginal school leadership there are two similar categories: community relations and family and community. The former is the general school to the community interactions. The latter is personal, specifically family centred, and totally dependent on a trusting and caring school and family relationship. Family relations can be best established after the five previous categories of the model have been successfully implemented. Without this, schools will mainly be successful with families that have become mainstream or with those who wish to be dependent on others. Therefore, a model of school leadership that begins with family and community healing would be very quickly stalled at the onset.

Participants in this research study gave the impression that the school and community lacked communication; thus no relationship existed. However, school and community relationships exist at all times. The issue is whether these will be positive, negative, or indifferent. Given the purpose, goals, and needs of the school, an indifferent relationship should be considered negative. Community relations are pivotal points for successful Native education. An effective orientation in this area is a catalyst for all programs and efforts. For example, does the school send report cards to parents who are illiterate or do not understand the format, or do the teachers personally visit the home to explain students' progress and report cards? Calliou (1993) commented that a community school in the Aboriginal context can be described as one that has "(a) community-based research and knowledge; (b) extra community awareness; (c) proactive problem solving; (d) educational activism; (e) participatory democracy; (f) intergenerational connectedness; and (g) egalitarianism" (p. 35).

Reserve schools are often major employers in the community and are second only to parents in terms of time spent with community children. One way or the other, school affects the lives of many people. The school's ability to carry out its goals is also dependent on the disposition of the community. Therefore, if there is a community issue that can be supported by the school, it should respectfully involve itself in ways appropriate to the community. For example, dysfunctional lifestyles, behaviours, and addictions drastically affect all community employers, children, and youth. As a result, most communities are developing individual and community healing initiatives. These goals of community and individual healing support school mandates and needs extremely well. Educators can support and be part of community healing in many ways. Support possibilities include participation in healing workshops, community-wide development processes on school issues, highly trained counsellors in schools, and many positive community adults in schools to support students as paracounsellors/teachers.

Much of the relationship between school and the community lies in communication. The attitude and approach toward school and community communication must be modelled by the school leader. Pianta and Walsh (1996) referred to the school and community interactions as conversations. There is a two-way dialogue and an exchange of information that informs both parties. Schools often fail in the active listening area of the conversation. In healthy conversations new views are created and form a basis for further reflection and action. Schools that are not honestly or successfully communicating students' achievements, weaknesses, and areas of concern are failing in their part of the conversation. These schools also facilitate community and family "denial." Using the language of addiction workers, these schools are enabling the problem. A family might avoid communicating to the school for fear of negative progress reports and to avoid hearing about concerns. If the school simultaneously serves as an enabler by failing to communicate, then both parties benefit by being reluctant to hear and act on the concerns of the other. Loosely using an addictions metaphor, it could be labelled as "mutual enabling" between school and family. The attitude develops that "I won't complain about you if you don't complain about me."

Some significant community relationship mistakes that well-intending educators in this research study made were failing to provide clear, frequent, and honest

communication about student progress; and failing to make persistent and effective efforts to involve families (even if this is no more than a social visit).

Instructional Practices

In this research study the teachers' classrooms were like microcosms of the school. The attention to Aboriginal identity, unique social and learning styles, and general community connection was minimal. The classroom is influenced by overall school atmosphere, relationships, programs, and events. However, once within the confines of the classroom, the teacher and student personal, social, and instructional relationship can be fairly class specific. Such relationships are central to achievement. Complicating this is the fact that the context of reserve schools is predominantly cross cultural, with non-Native teachers instructing Native students. In addition, some Native teachers rely on mainstream education strategies rather than Native-centred pedagogy (Ward, 1992). In this circumstance of cross-cultural education, misunderstandings are frequent. For example, "social competence is paramount to function successfully in school and community environments" (Rivera & Rogers-Adkinson, 1997, p. 75). However, in the Native school dominated by mainstream practices, frequent misinterpretations of culturally linked behaviour can unfairly place students in conflict with the school's expectations (Rivera & Rogers-Adkinson). According to Deyhle and Swisher (1997), "Student teacher relations are framed by community tension and resistance to assimilating practices" (p. 127). What teachers of Aboriginal students are interpreting as misbehaviour may be displays of resistance. Deyhle and Swisher also commented that resistance can be demonstrated in silent and/or passive behaviour. The teacher is critical in avoiding this passive resistance. The teacher should "construct inter-cultural bridges for communication and instruction. Effective teachers create 'two-way learning paths'" (p. 156). Examples of this include teachers learning Native culture from the school youth.

There is a continuum of cross-cultural understanding of which teachers should be aware and strive to master. There are four stages: cultural knowledge—a familiarization with selected cultural characteristics, history, values, belief systems, and behaviours; cultural awareness—a sensitivity and understanding involving an internal change in

attitude and values; cultural sensitivity—knowing that cultural differences exist without assigning values or judgements on these; and cultural competence—having a consistent and matched set of behaviours and attitudes that enable the individual or agency to work effectively in the different culture (BC Ministry, 2001).

Mainstream teachers, such as those involved in this research study, have important roles in Aboriginal-centred Native education. Teachers of Native students should serve as cultural brokers between the mainstream formal education process and the need for cultural maintenance (Stairs, 1995). This is not to be limited to superficial processes, but characterized by sustained, meaningful programs with active teacher pedagogy. Measures to balance and/or negate the negative or ineffective aspects of the teacher and student cross-cultural relationship should include the use of elders, guest community instructors, and local Native people as educational assistants. These community people should be employed in a way that creates the critical mass required to change the instructional impasse that often interferes with academic achievement. Smith (2000) stated that

> where indigenous people are in educational crisis, indigenous educators and teachers must be trained as change agents to transform these undesirable circumstances. They must develop a radical pedagogy (a teaching approach for change). Such pedagogy must also be informed by their own cultural preferences and respond to their own critical circumstances. (p. 70)

Teaching with relationship considerations in mind is important for both Native and non-Native teachers. Goulet (2001) complimented teachers who take "the time to build warm, close human relationships with their students" (p. 73). A teacher must be what Irvine (as cited in Schmidt, 1999) described as "warm demanders." These are adults who balance care and concern with expectations for high academic achievement. Other interpersonal considerations include following small community relationship patterns, having a personal relationship rather than a power relationship with each student, having relationships based in a positive orientation, having faith in the students' ability to reach expectations, and having a resiliency focus when dealing with struggling students.

Resiliency focuses counselling and teaching on students' strengths. These are developed to compensate for weaknesses in student skills or the home environment. The goal is to learn strategies that help to develop a resilient person. Teachers' instructional

considerations are also important, and these include Native learning and interactionary styles, curriculum relevancy, teachings on Native identity, history from an Aboriginal point of view, Native issues and local priorities and needs, and teachers serving as cultural brokers. The cross-cultural circumstance requires reasonable efforts from all involved to be sensitive to the preferences of each. Ward (1992) stated that "successful non-indigenous teachers of indigenous children have learned to look at themselves from the point of view of another culture" (p. 40).

This reflective approach should be based on a meaningful understanding of the purpose, value, and strengths that each cultural pedagogy offers. For example, Native and non-Native people differ in the way that they formulate knowledge. This is often falsely simplified to "dichotomies between oral and written, narrative and definitive, practical and canonical, and fluid and fixed; the reality is far more complex" (Smith & Ward, 2000, p. 11). For example, Native people focus on what a place is, whereas non-Native people focus on what happened at a place. For Native people, meanings associated with a place grow and change and are reformulated as people continue to visit and interact with the place. In contrast, non-Native people create a "definitive representation of them as an independent reality" (p. 11). Indigenous people also

> reveal knowledge in a gradual manner and at different levels according to what is considered appropriate for the interpreter to know. . . . It is rarely definitive. . . . Grounded in oral traditions, it is multivalent, ambiguous and open to alternative renditions according to the context of interpretation. (p. 11)

The emphasis here is on successful student (and teacher) learning facilitated by cross-cultural growth, understanding, and appreciation. A great deal of the success in a Native community school is contingent on cross-cultural bridges and growth. This need is constant and involves all aspects of education and the social aspects of school. In my experience the best growth in cultural understanding and cultural barrier removal occurs when personal values and experiences, and emotions are involved. Taught with care, compassion, involvement, and a reflective approach, education is full of such opportunities. In the context of Native students, art and practical subjects provide clear and effective opportunities for this. Teacher community orientations and participation in community events serve this purpose as well. Generally, anything that brings teachers,

students, and the community people shoulder to shoulder, eye to eye, and laughing and feeling together will help all involved to reach the emotional dimensions that blend and harmonize people.

Beyond teacher-student relations and dynamics are schoolwide considerations that impact on learning, such as distinguishing between student programming needs for social skill learning, at-risk behaviours, and special learning needs; establishing a quality learning experience (e.g., productive, time on task, learning variety); and ensuring academic engagement in the mainstream and local curricula. Cummins (1986) commented that "critical theorists recognize that minority language students succeed educationally to the extent that political processes in schools reverse those that legitimize the domination and disablement of members of the minority group as a whole" (p. 53). He also stated that

> these processes are four-fold. First, the minority students language must be incorporated into process and content of schooling: second, community members must be involved collaboratively in making curricular and administrative decisions at school; third, instructional practices should encourage student-student dialogue in collaborative learning contexts that foster intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation; and last, assessment should consist of procedures that locate the pathologies of minority student failure not within the mind of the individual learner, thereby legitimizing transmission models of instruction, but within larger contexts of unequal power relations between dominated and dominating groups in society. (p. 53)

Educators in this research study commented on the need for relevant culture curriculum for Aboriginal students. The educational consortium of western Canadian provinces and territories have produced the Western Protocol on Aboriginal Languages and Culture Curriculum (2000). This document is relevant to the schools in this research study. Its stated aim is to provide students with "Aboriginal perspectives and skills (including language) that will help them to (a) find balance within themselves to live peacefully with themselves, one another, and the land; and (b) play a role in revitalizing Aboriginal languages and cultures.

Management, Leadership, and Government

The terms *manager* and *leader* as applied to the band council, Chief, and the school principal may be used differently in different communities. In this research study one commonality that seemed to exist is that the band leaders and school principals often operate separately from each other. This model purposely groups the principal, band council, and chief into the executive council. There is an executive council leadership dialogue that is missing in most of the schools involved in this research study. It would be advantageous for the school executive council leadership to assume the perspective of Freire's (1970) concept of cultural synthesis. He referred to cultural synthesis as the result of processes that resolve the contradiction between the world view of the leader and the world view of the grassroots people. Freire stated:

> Instead of following predetermined plans, leaders and people, mutually identified, together create the guidelines of their action. In this synthesis, leaders and people are somehow reborn in new knowledge and new action. Knowledge of the alienated culture leads to transforming action resulting in a culture which is being freed from alienation. The more sophisticated knowledge of the leaders is remade in the empirical knowledge of the people, while the latter is refined by the former. (p. 162)

It is incumbent on the leaders (band management and school management) to actively ensure that there are positive relationships between educators and the community managers. This is key to effective problem solving, decision making, programming, and establishing an educational purpose in the community and within students. There are cross-cultural realities that will come into play in most issues. This may be difficult to recognize and interpret. An example that applies to band counsellors is that "Indigenous people are continually frustrated by the expectation that they are to be speaking on behalf of a community or a cultural experience, rather than simply expressing their own individual, or contextual views on the world" (Meekison; as cited in Smith & Ward, 2000, p. 12). Non-Native managers should also be aware that, traditionally, most Aboriginal groups were based on local autonomy and consensus decision making (Jules, 1988). It should be noted that in this sense consensus is not a majority; nor does it involve a voting system. It is an agreement or acceptance by all members of the group. Such a process requires a great deal of dialogue, patience, stakeholder involvement, and

authentic listening, which will likely be followed by frequent adjustment and refinement. This can be a time-consuming process.

To guide the school and band leaders, there needs to be a community vision for success; an honest, effective reporting of education levels (e.g., provincial test results); reporting in context of the profiles (e.g., attendance, progress over years); a role for test and standards in school improvement; management ensuring accountability and transparency; and a clear direction. Students and parents are critical partners in the testing and accountability process. Costa (as cited in Alberta Assessment Consortium, 1999) cautioned that "we must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves" (p. 24).

Managers must ensure that human resource support is such that the teachers have "teachable" classes with respect to desired outcomes. The ratio and combination of below-average, special-needs, and behaviour-challenged students to average and above-average students determines class learning as much as does teacher skill. There is a student critical mass that varies depending on student needs and teacher skill. This will prevent school learning if it is in the negative. The influence of the mass of negatively behaving students can also teach well-behaved and adjusted students dysfunctional behaviours. In this way the school can be part of disseminating community dysfunctions.

Government funding agencies are responsible for ensuring that schools have the resources to carry out their mandates. The various governments seem to have used devolution and community self-governance as a way of backing out of these consultation and funding responsibilities.

Recently, the Minister of Learning in Alberta (Alberta Learning, 2002) released a study that found that there were approximately four special-needs students in each Alberta provincial class. The Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg, was quoted as saying, "I'm not happy with special-needs education the way it's occurring now, and this is not just an Alberta issue. This goes right across the country" (*Journal* Staff, 3 January 2002, pp. A1-A2). One would expect the statistics in Native schools to be even more dramatic and challenging for teachers. Interviewees in this research study strongly confirmed this. Further basis for this speculation comes from the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2001), which has stated that

> over-representation of Aboriginal students in populations with special needs has been well documented both in research literature and in the data collection collected by the Ministry of Education of British Columbia in its student-level data collection system. This over-representation is greatest in the area of behaviour disorders where the reported incidence among Aboriginal students in British Columbia is approximately 3.5 times that of the general K-12 student population. The Ministry recognizes students with behavioural disorders in three separate categories. However, the study was limited to the category of "Severe Behavioural Disorders. (p. 1)

Native schools must be provided with stable and ample funding to meet the extensive academic, social, and cultural programming required. Cozzello (1992) wrote that program financing is one of the most vital components of Aboriginal self-determination. He commented that history has demonstrated that "the failures in this area tend to overshadow any successful inroads made by Aboriginal people's efforts to attain self-determination. In fact, many Native groups operate in an environment that can best be described as continued financial exigency" (p. 87).

Band counsellors should be using the advantages of the schooling process to assist families in sharing Aboriginal culture and heritage. Cultural programs in the school, on the land, and integrated between community and school should be the direct responsibility of the band councillors or a permanent cultural specialist. It is pointless to leave these programs to volunteers and non-Native educators to coordinate. The band might take note of Berry's (1999) findings that Aboriginal people identified traditional culture, the land, family, languages, spirituality, and Elders as the most positive influences on their cultural identity. The most negative influences were government institutions, residential schools, prejudice, education, church, and the media.

The final critical role of management in today's Aboriginal schools is to ensure that staff have a feeling of financial and physical security and believe that the community and leaders appreciate their efforts and that they are compensated at the prevailing professional standards. This point is made with few words; however, it is extremely important and was stressed by many of the participants in this research study.

Family and Community

The participants commented that family and community factors are critical elements in school success. It is often difficult for school staff to gain enough respect from the families of the Native community to achieve a genuine and respectfully personal or social relationship. After years of poor relations, the families will be suspicious, guarded, and unwilling to become involved with what they see as a foreign institution. It is likely that families will not be truly accepting of the school's initiatives, unless certain community-school relationships and philosophical prerequisites are achieved. Therefore, to start the relationship with families, a Native school must first demonstrate a responsive community-centred decision-making philosophy, a school-community identity, meaningful and partnered community relations, instructional practices that will be successful with students, and overall sound educational management. After these Native-centred efforts, families will become more trusting, accepting, and willing to work in partnership. For this reason, and to reinforce educators' first and main responsibilities, the category of family and community needs has been left toward the end of the description of this model.

Native families, like all families, mediate the world for their children, and this includes schooling. Therefore, families are critical partners. Native communities currently have enormous issues and dysfunctions to solve. They are in a very painful process of healing, cultural refining, and identity re-emergence. This involves new emotions, insights, self-awareness, and challenges (Laroque, 1975). Recognizing the severity and the social and individual dysfunctions impacting Native families, the Royal Commission (Government of Canada, 1996) stated:

> The failure of responsibility that we seek to understand and correct is not a failure of Aboriginal families. Rather it is a failure of a public policy to recognize and respect Aboriginal culture and family systems and to ensure a just distribution of the wealth and power of this land so that Aboriginal nations, communities and families can provide for themselves and determine how best to pursue a good life. (p. 1)

From the research it can be seen that early school leaving is a process rather than an event, students 'fade out' over time, and there is no specific typical profile of a school

dropout (GNWT, 2000, p. 6). In addition, research is increasingly focussing on "the interplay between school structure, and personal, social and family issues and characteristics" (p. 10). This interplay leads to the need for sustained and broad partnerships between the school and families. It should also be noted that "children in schools are a reflection of the families in which they are raised. If families and communities are healthy, children will be healthy" (p. 15). The development of healthy communities and families is enhanced by integrating services and service delivery, as well as building partnerships between a range of organizations. Native communities and families will be healed only after meaningful efforts sustained over generations. This task is so large that it is very much dependent on interagency services outside of the school. However, schools have a significant and critical role.

With the model presented here, schools will be in an excellent position to support family and community healing. The school can be supportive by being understanding and nonconfrontational. The school can offer suitable programs and adapt school studies to deal with the effects of community dysfunctions and intergenerational colonization and assimilation. Examples of these programs include parenting classes for high school credit, a school day care for teen mothers, Canadian and Native studies from an Aboriginal perspective, and elementary and high school courses in traditional skills and language. Goulet (2001) commented that teachers in Native schools should seek "places and ways to develop relationships outside the formal relationships of teaching with its inherent or assumed hierarchal structure" (p. 75). Personal relationships are a must when teaching in an Aboriginal setting. This does not mean intimacy or "best friendships," but a people-first approach to all aspects of education and the social involvements that come with it. The school as an organization should be orientated in this way as well.

Continuity and Community Capacity

A final component of the essential Native school requirements framework (Figure 1) and an ultimate educational leadership goal is being part of the development of community capacity. Schools in this study were overwhelmed by the present to be concerning themselves with future community capacity-building goals. However, an effective Native community school should be an active partner in fulfilling this need and in the related processes. The ideal is an interactive partnership with schools, families, and

communities working together to preserve the positive character of the past, maintain the well-rounded health found in the present, and participate in capacity building for a sustainable future. As the largest institution of learning in the community, the K-12 school system is a cornerstone for community development. Currently, the reliability and effectiveness of this partnership vary with the will, understanding, and knowledge of changing school principals.

This model includes a section on capacity building to provide continuity and opportunity in Aboriginal school and community relationships. It intends to provide a missing link in sustained community development. It also provides a meaningful way to place the school into the currently fragmented process of community development. Certainly the school system is needed. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996) acknowledged that local Aboriginal-controlled services and administration have grown significantly. However, the Commission predicted a shortage of Aboriginal workers for future self-government administrators and community service workers due to having an unskilled labour pool in the Native communities.

Being part of the human resource development of the community can benefit the school directly and immediately, as well as offer many long-term benefits to the entire community. For example, DIAND, various government departments, and public organizations allocate significant funding to support activities related directly or indirectly to capacity development (Institute on Governance, 1997). I have also used government training funds for the multiyear funding of an Aboriginal vice-principal (Breen, 1998), an additional secretary, a cultural worker, and a variety of community and regional work-skills training programs. One partnership resulted in a basic adult literacy program in a K-7 school (Breen, 1992). The adult students became relevant role models for the younger students. After learning basic principles of teaching, they also served as elementary classroom reading tutors and reading buddies for one hour a day. The participants grew in their skills in dealing with children and in their understanding of the school process. This literacy project created school and community bridging between a number of families and teachers that was significant and long lasting. These examples are consistent with the Royal Commission's recommendations for innovative education,

accreditation techniques, distance education, on-the-job training, and cooperative and internship arrangements (Institute on Governance, 1997).

In the Native community of Rae-Edzo, NWT, it was found that at Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School there were enough high school students with financial childcare subsidies to create a day care in the community high school. Community people were hired and trained, and a child care worker was certified through ongoing HRD programs. This also provided parenting knowledge to the community, a sound school-based learning environment for babies and toddlers, a nutrition program, and a school and community connection through a needed and meaningful service. An unexpected benefit was the effect that babies, toddlers, and young mothers had in the junior high/high school. Ironically, the teenage mothers added maturity to the setting. The young babies and toddlers provided the opportunity, need, and responsibility for public care, love, and nurturing. With the young ones walking around the school with their parents and extended family members during lunch hour, the previously rowdy students settled themselves.

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996), any long-term solutions to the problems in Native communities must involve capacity building. Often capacity building is inadequately practised as little more than occasional job training. Training programs in Native communities do occur. However, many of these have been

> short-term employment and training programs aimed at "kick-starting" an individual's career. These programs have typically met with limited success because they do not address the social and systemic barriers experienced by Aboriginal people. Ideally, social programs must be an integral part of preparing individuals for employment and training activities. (pp. 10-11)

A recent goal of mainstream government has been to remove people from income support systems such as welfare. According to Ambler (1977), Native leaders have felt that most policy approaches to income support are punitive by nature and serve only to focus on the symptoms of poverty rather than the root causes. A better, traditional Native strategy is reducing personal dependency through a family-based and community-education centred approach. Personal skill and motivation enhancement is likely needed; however, the entire community approach is key and should be based on traditional beliefs

of sharing, generosity, sustainability, and reciprocity (Ambler). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996) reported that capacity building must take into account social issues. These issues are clearly linked to education and include illiteracy, low grade levels, and being unskilled and unprepared for work. The other issues were poverty, health, housing, family violence, child care, spirituality, and language and traditional ways of life (Royal Commission).

The understanding of larger community personal issues can facilitate other insights. Smith (2000) stated that there is a need for Aboriginal adults to "develop critical understandings and insights to the point where they are resolved to take action themselves to change their lives" (p. 65). Reporting on the successes of Aboriginal Australians, Smith noted that when the Maori became aware of "notions of power relations, economic disparities, and ideological persuasion, they were subsequently more able to deconstruct the existing structural impediments implicit in education, and to take the further step of developing their own resistance initiatives" (p. 65). He commented that the Maori then took actions that resulted in social, cultural, and political transformation by implementing self-determining structures, practices, and alternatives.

According to Smith (2000), the experience of the Maori people may allow "some generalizations about a theory of transformative action that might be more widely applied to other indigenous situations" (p. 66). He also commented that "these Kaupapa Maori intervention principles and elements can be further described as a 'theory of transformative praxis'" (p. 66). The aims of this theory are "(a) the revitalization of language, knowledge, and culture; and (b) the development of increased levels of academic achievement" (p. 66). Smith claimed that Kaupapa Maori educational interventions represent the evolution of a sophisticated response to freeing themselves from multiple oppressions and economic exploitation. The community principles developed from the experiences of the Maori people are the principles of self-determination or relative autonomy, validating and legitimizing cultural aspirations and identity, incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy, mediating socioeconomic and home difficulties, incorporating cultural structures that emphasize collectivity rather than individually such as the notion of the extended family, and a shared and collective vision and philosophy (pp. 66-68).

Conclusion

The model suggested in this dissertation is divided into categories and subrequirements. However, the implementation cannot be limited to concentrating on a few areas of preference or convenience. Instrumental to the success of this model is compensation for a school's inability to provide an essential requirement. Requirements cannot simply be omitted and replaced with mainstream approaches. For example, if there are not enough Aboriginal teachers, then funding resources should be directed to empower and train a critical mass of local educational paraprofessionals or an elder in residence or a number of elders working in support programs, and so forth.

Another example of a compensating strategy involves local decision making. A successful Aboriginal school requires a great deal of community goal setting, direction, and decision making. However, it is possible that in the initial stages of community school partnership, there will not be community people willing or available to be part of a local education authority. Regardless, the school must find ways to achieve the community decision-making objective. To compensate, the school could hold meetings on specific issues in community respected and honoured locations. In addition, the local school staff (custodians, secretaries, educational assistants) and interested parents could be organized into an advisory committee. With such sincere measures the community will eventually respond to the request for school trustees and committee members. I have observed (not during this study) that when a Native school is not open and responsive to community input, the community members distance themselves from the school, and/or less skilled community members find their way onto local education authorities. However, when the schools are open, responsive, and progressive, then skilled individuals and leaders of the community wish to be part of school committees and involve themselves in other ways.

Skipping any of the essential Aboriginal school requirements outlined in this model will likely lead to isolated, infrequent, and therefore ineffective Aboriginal programming. It also results in misdirected efforts and a fragmented education for students. If the task of fulfilling all areas of the model is initially too much, then a school should prioritize the areas of highest value. The decision should be made in conjunction

with the community. Compensation for areas still neglected should be planned for with school support agencies and community leadership.

Successful Native schools exist in a fragile state. These schools experience an enormous number of false starts and restarts, cross-cultural confusions, and a great deal of pressure to be a mainstream school. Therefore, when the puzzle has been placed together successfully, it should be considered to be similar to a fragile house of cards. The failure to implement or continue one piece of the framework, without compensating support, may collapse the entire structure.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Many of the participants involved in this research were experienced teachers of Native students. They expressed a frustration that despite years of poor results little had been done to enhance student academic school performance. They mentioned that "convenient excuses" are used, and little change has taken place. A review of the literature supports this view. Compared to research related to mainstream Canadian schools there is a scarcity of research on Native students and their education. However, the commissions, reports, and studies that do exist are very good and consistently search for the views of the Native people themselves. When reviewing this literature it becomes obvious that the same themes and recommendations are brought forth consistently. Couture (1997) claimed that Alberta Native protests about education are "typically followed by government attempts to downplay the situation as not as bad as Natives perceive it to be, and by calls for yet another task force on the issue" (p. 185). McLeish (1994) conducted research in an Alberta Native community in the 1970s and then reviewed the numerous studies subsequent to his original study. In his 1994 article he concluded, "The concerns three decades ago are still with us today. The three most important, of immediate concern, were given as education, Indian heritage and culture, . . . and deficiencies in the administration and provision of education" (p. 446).

First Nations and mainstream Canadian society and its schools generally hold different perspectives in a significant number of critical areas. This was fundamentally true for schools involved in this study. Therefore a simple merger of these two will be unsuccessful and frustrating and will actually create problems for those dependent on the school. Therefore, a school based on Native views of the world with progressive opportunities for the learning of mainstream society goals and curricula is the only possible answer. Certainly, the exact opposite has been tried for years with ineffective community and individual results. Aikenhead (2002) commented that

> Aboriginal knowledge about the natural world contrasts with Western scientific knowledge in a number of ways. Aboriginal and scientific knowledge differ in their social goals: survival of a people versus the luxury of gaining knowledge for the sake of knowledge and for power over the nature and other people (Peat,

> 1994). They differ in intellectual goals: to co-exist with mystery in nature by celebrating mystery versus to eradicate mystery by explaining it away (Ermine, 1995). They differ in their association with human action: intimately and subjectively interrelated versus formally and objectively decontextualized (Pomeroy, 1992). They differ in other ways as well: holistic First Nations perspectives with their gentle, accommodating, intuitive, and spiritual wisdom, versus reductionist Western science with its aggressive, manipulative, mechanistic, and analytical explanations (Allen, 1995; Ermine, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Knudson and Suzuki, 1992; Peat, 1994; Pomeroy, 1992). "The Western world has capitulated to a dogmatic fixation on power and control at the expense of authentic insights into the nature and origin of knowledge as truth" (Ermine, 1995, p. 102). They differ in their basic concepts of time: circular for Aboriginals, rectilinear for scientists. (p. 4)

Native Education has been dominated by the values, curricula, and practices of mainstream Canadian educators. This has been characterized by the ignoring, marginalizing, and exclusion of Native parents and leaders. Therefore, schools have had an active role in the acculturation of Native people. As one Native educator who was interviewed commented, the school was still using the same approaches as when it was a "federal school." This was also referred to as the "Indian Affairs ghost." The cost of this acculturation has been enormous. Berry (1999) claimed that the process of acculturation has created cultural disruption that has led to individual identity loss, confusion, and reduced well-being. He argued that the key to reversing these losses is to restructure relationships with Native people. Government agencies and schools are critical partners that must take significant measures to restructure their relationship with Native people. However, Native people also need to re-orientate themselves. Smith (2000) commented that the Maori people found a successful model for education by taking "more control over the key decision-making and organization of their own education" (p. 66). He added that the people needed to unlearn many of their contemporary assumptions and current ways of organizing their society. These modern orientations and practices are not Aboriginal, but products of forced or subtle assimilation experiences:

> This initiative required a significant amount of relearning by Maori people themselves. For example, Maori needed to unshackle themselves from the hegemonies that held them blindly to support education that was often directly antagonistic to their cultural aspirations. Maori parents had to find resources from within their own communities to develop language nurseries. (p. 65)

The consequences of failing to program educationally and socially for the Native population goes far beyond school failure. Demographic projections for future Native populations predict sharp increases (Statistics Canada, 1998b, p. 3). As a result, school failure will have an even greater impact on social support systems. In addition, the future special-needs Native population numbers will rise proportionately. Student problems that have a root in personal or family abuse, neglect, addictions, fetal alcohol disorders and societal injustices are treatable if the required resources are provided. To date, the treatment of these issues has been inconsistent and generally poor to very poor. Immediate support from the school, social services, and health agencies is needed to ensure that individual students with special needs are productive and healthy contributors to society.

The educators surveyed in this research study felt that it would benefit individual Native students and the schools overall if the special-needs funding and provincial achievement exemption criteria were broadened to include those who are socially inept and disadvantaged. Many students come to school unable to learn because of severe disadvantages in this area. Readers from a middle-class background or even a low-middle-class Canadian background may not be able to truly relate to the impact of these disadvantages. Many aspects of school readiness and daily preparation for learning are naturally achieved and taken for granted by children and parents of mainstream Canada. The extent, severity, and short- and long-term consequences of a lack of skills in this area may also be underestimated or ignored by those in charge of the administration of First Nations education. This neglect is shown in funding practices. However, it should be noted that learning social skills and school success strategies cannot become a cover for a resurgence of assimilation practices in the school. The Aboriginal participants in this research study reported that poor student behaviour, low self-esteem, and failure to achieve socially and otherwise are not consistent with traditional Native character and abilities. The school and community must work in partnership to correct this serious problem in a way that is uniquely Aboriginal and community suitable. The participants also reported that a minority of students were successful academically. They were seen as fragile role models and future leaders who also required careful support.

The schools in this study claimed that community cultural programming is a priority. However, there was an absence of significant visible and continuous cultural programming. In the context of modern management, real values and priorities are shown in funding/budgeting and human resources allocations. Administration often shows its values by where (and how much) it allocates funding. Native reserve schools cannot have unlimited funding. However, discretionary and priority spending should be based on building an Aboriginal community foundation as a priority. You cannot have this without elders and cultural necessities. Whether you have an extra one or two academic teachers or more literacy books or other supplies will matter very little if the education system does not meet the unique prerequisites for Native student success. Each of these schools can become wonderful examples of how the old can be preserved, adapted, and merged with the advantages of the modern world to create a different way.

Many participants in this research study felt that for a minority of students their awareness of the world, motivation, and vision for the future were lacking. According to Smith (2000), the world would be better off if Aboriginal people were in a role as equal and active participants and as innovators and leaders in an interconnected world. Smith also commented that Native people should welcome this role because cultural isolation is no longer a viable option. Being an active part of the contemporary world and maintaining Aboriginal perspectives and lifestyle are difficult tasks that must be done with a great deal of constant consideration. In many communities the increased empowerment of local band councils in community governance has been presented as a way to stop and even reverse the assimilation of Native people. However, according to Smith (2000), the process may have simply switched paths. He commented that, today, globalization, intensified and intergenerational social problems, the increasing commodification of culture, entrenched inequality, growing feelings of insecurity, and a loss of identity are the weapons of assimilation. "For many indigenous peoples, globalization threatens to extend the process of colonization begun 400 years ago" (p. 2). Smith added that "as cultural boundaries dissolve and fundamentally Western understandings and attitudes become dominant, more and more people are conversing in the universal language of popular culture" (p. 2).

Significant and powerful partners in any effort to balance the cultural genocide that globalization may bring are the community schools and educational system. In a larger sense, this means that a Native community school requires an egalitarian school perspective as an intrinsic value. For example, for the many reasons previously discussed throughout this dissertation, school should be part of the maintenance of tradition and the development of new Aboriginal expressions in the access of art and representation, indigenous lifestyle, cultural tourism and enterprise, and indigenous people in the information age. This must be orientated in a way that sees Aboriginal people control their culture and intellectual property (Smith, 2000). Furthermore, the goal of fostering a personal awareness of culture, which will enhance a student's daily life, can be met only if their daily context and learning is immersed in Aboriginal culture. In the modern world, for young people to truly understand their heritage and their culture, they must experience it, live it, and study it as part of their school experience. Because schooling is a large part of students' daily life, it has a significant role to play in this important area of personal development.

Without a planned cultural program there is little—or at least little consistent—programming that would make a Native school any different from a non-Native school. This is a shame; Aboriginal schools, communities, and students lose the benefit of the unique strength of character and knowledge that has always been the foundation of the Aboriginal community culture. Teachers in this research study felt that when they made efforts to integrate culture experiences into curriculum delivery, their efforts were significantly compromised by limited time and resources and demanding curricula to teach. Cultural activities are very demanding in preparation time, are impossible with large class sizes, and require specialized knowledge that most teachers lack. Accessing local community experts is an excellent way to get teachers into the community and to develop equity in the educational power relationship. However, this is very time consuming. In addition, this is in the context of little availability of teacher or principal preparation time and heavy workloads. Thus, cultural types of contacts are seldom made, or are made in only a few of the areas required. Therefore, to support teachers and ensure that the school goes beyond a meaningless or superficial exposure to culture, permanent full-time resource school staff are critical. Couture (2000), commented that an elder is

any person respected and "recognized by the Aboriginal community as having knowledge and understanding of the traditional culture of the community, including the physical manifestations of the culture of the people and their spiritual and social traditions" (p. 1). He adds that "Elders may have additional attributes, such as those of traditional healer, and may be identified as such, only by Aboriginal communities" (p. 1). Someone matching this description would be a tremendous addition to any school.

According to Blesse (personal communication, 2002), schools need to compensate for cultural dominance by providing periods of time that are totally Aboriginal. She referred to these as breaks in school time. This would provide relief from the dissonance experienced by youth while being schooled in non-Native systems. The current practices in Native Education see culture as an add-on, or at best as an integral part. This view of giving students total relief from the school processes may be startling to mainstream educators of Native students. Yet if any of them were immersed in an Aboriginal bush camp for 10 months, they would likely desire periodic breaks and holidays in their home culture. The concept of Aboriginal immersion retreats is very similar to French immersion found in mainstream schools. Aboriginal students would experience cultural and language immersion for the purposes of cultural learning and personal development (Blesse). Aboriginal immersion refers to a solid block of time that is spent away from the school and purely Aboriginal in its context, process, and purposes. School culture and language classes are still needed. However, beyond these are extensive periods away from the school in an Aboriginal setting; for example, community-organized and -instructed bush camps at six- to eight-week intervals for one to two weeks in duration. Blesse asserted that these immersion programs could also be ideal opportunities for families and community members to provide the appropriate cultural rights of passage and other critical ways of life that define an Aboriginal person's identity. Currently, most Aboriginal children miss these vital cultural lessons because the schools occupy a great deal of their daily life.

Aboriginal knowledge is also required by those who work with Aboriginal students. In partnership with the community, the school should create Aboriginal education and community culture inservice and professional development programs for the teaching staff. Mandatory inservice for new teachers on the Western Aboriginal

Language and Culture curriculum should be part of school professional development. In addition, all teachers in Native schools should be provided with meaningful and continuous inservice on contemporary Native issues, local issues, Native history (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal perspective), cross-cultural dynamics, and related social and health issues. This could be the focus for the first two days of the school year, with some variation for more knowledgeable participants. All school staff should be encouraged to pursue Native cultural activities and allowed work time off for this purpose as required (e.g., part of leave days). Non-Native teachers must initiate frequent and regular efforts to become aware of the community and the culture in which they teach and live. This will lead to personal comfort and enjoyment and positive student-parent-teacher relationships.

The need for teacher professional development goes well beyond cultural understandings. The reserve-school teachers and students in this research study were isolated from contemporary schools. In such a circumstance it is easy to lose professional practice and difficult to stay innovative and to maintain continuity and standards in terms of expectations and ideal practices. A simple idea that serves many student and teacher needs is to establish sister schools with the provincial system. Student, teacher, and administrator exchanges, shared workshops, and educational/cultural lessons could be developed. Cooperative learning between Native and non-Native students would significantly benefit all involved.

Few of the schools visited seemed to see the big relationship picture, or at least failed to consider this significantly during interviews. They also underestimated the subtle but far-reaching influence of significant social relationships. Pianta and Walsh (1996) claimed that relationships and systems are critical to understanding at-risk students. In their book *High-Risk Children In Schools*: *Constructing Sustaining Relationship*, Pianta and Walsh stated that "school failure is at its core caused by an inability or an unwillingness to communicate—a relationship problem" (p. 24). Citing Bruner, they referred to teaching (the relationship between the teacher and the learner) as an extension of conversation. The authors commented that "to see schooling as communication forces us to see it as conversation, which requires us to attend to all parties involved" (p. 25).

Participants in this research study saw relationships as static and one dimensional. Pianta and Walsh (1996) referred to students experiencing many contexts or systems. They claimed that these are all relational and interactive systems, or individual niches, within the larger totality of environments. Each interacts with the child as part of child development. The writers identified the school system and the child and family system as the two main systems. Within the school system some of the context, or subsystems, are the neighbourhood, community, occupation and employment, regulatory agents, culture, ethnicity, location, and finances. In addition, there are many other school-based contexts. The child and family system has the context of culture, ethnicity, community, law, and policy. Smaller niches include child care, extended family, religious organizations, neighbourhood, agencies, peers, and the effect of employment or a lack of employment. The authors commented that systems have subordinate and superordinate relations to each another, which influence and regulate. Pianta and Walsh explained that "any outcome is itself a multiple determined product of a large number of factors interacting over time" (p. 65). Therefore, "multiple perspective are possible and plausible in examining a given outcome" (p. 65).

There is also a very critical context of humanity for all of this. All schools in this study must remember that their schools are operating in the only homeland of their Aboriginal community. As such, there is nowhere also for these children and youth to go for their culture and identity (A. James, personal communication, September 17, 2002). Beyond this is the sense of community—in fact, the real experience of community—that occurs in Native centres. It is a unique expression of humanity that much of mainstream Canada has lost. To not participate in this as a school is not only a loss educationally, but also a disservice to the children and youth. However, the contemporary Native world wishes to be part of many aspects of mainstream society. This search for balance and integration presents schools with a challenge and an incredible opportunity. The potential learning outcomes and the synergy that might emerge from this integration are wonderful and immeasurable. This formidable task of creating a seamless merging of two cultures is an exciting and rewarding educational challenge, which may be one of the few truly new educational frontiers left in research and educational practice. The prize for success will

reside in the hearts, souls, skills, talents, and character of the Aboriginal children and youth, a prize that is second to none.

Native students from the schools involved in this study are failing because the schools are not following the most elementary of teaching practices. This fundamental methodology is to build from the foundation of the familiar, progress to new skills and the less familiar, and then add the abstract or more distant concepts as the learner is ready. This need permeates through all aspects of the school, and its failure is greatly amplified when there is a discrepancy in student world views and practices and the views and practices of educators and the school as an organization. A correction of these and the related educational failings will be a catalyst for the creation of a successful school, community, family, and student relationship, which in turn will foster academic performance.

The schools in this research study have also strayed from another fundamental aspect of pedagogy. Teaching is a social process, and as such it is all about relationships. Relationships are the key to success, particularly in Native schools because of the cross-cultural context. The schools in this study had virtually little community and/or family relationships, and therefore, with some exception, student and educator relationships were strained at best. The most basic human variable of the teacher and student relationship was not accommodated. In addition, many aspects of school, curriculum, and instructional practice communicated that the students' most cherished ways of life, beliefs, and valued family relationships were wrong, inadequate, or at least not the preferred way. Learning is confused because the school is actually confusing the students. Correction of this problem starts with school philosophy but must involve every aspect of school organization, relationships, and instruction and learning.

A long-term and sustainable solution for the shortcomings found in the Aboriginal schools involved in this study requires a systematic and planned approach. The needs are extensive and range from foundational to critical and relevant aspects of cognition. The task could be extensive and will therefore likely require years of progressive planning. To facilitate this and create a manageable and positive-centred tool, this dissertation has created an all-encompassing Aboriginal-based education and leadership model (Figure 1, the requirements of an Aboriginal school). The model focuses on the community

education leaders (band councils and principal) as the stewards of school implementation and success.

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